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ABSTRACT

This book, which provides information parents can use to counter violent television programing, alerts parents to the fact that television programing in the United States is pushing violent entertainment to its technological limits and allowing children to interact with the programing through their toys. The nine chapters in Part I discuss the way in which images influence consciousness, characteristics of TV interactive toys, financial incentives for broadcasters and toy manufacturers, commercial exploitation of children, influences of violent toys on children's behavior and play patterns, the tragic intrusion of toys and fantasy into real conflicts, basic facts about the influence of television on children, efforts by advocates to counter the trend to violence, and needed regulations. The seven chapters in Part II provide parents with information and guidelines for developing children's critical viewing abilities, creating alternative images through imaginative play and other activities, supporting alternative activities, teaching nonviolent ways of conflict resolution, and teaching values. Also provided in Part II are guidelines for community action groups and teachers who wish to encourage critical viewing, create a warm and caring classroom community, and promote moral development. Appendices list publications, organizations, and resources related to critical viewing, alternatives to television, creative problem solving and cooperation, children's social and emotional education, and community action. (RH)

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TV Interactive Toys
The New High Tech Threat To Children

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by Pamela Tuchscherer

Fight back without a gun —
arm your child with knowledge.

TV Interactive Toys:
The New High Tech Threat to Children

Fight back without a gun—
arm your child with knowledge.

Pamela Tuchscherer

Foreword by
Lendon H. Smith, M.D.

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To my children,
Jamie, Holly and Todd

May I allow you knowledge.
For knowledge is power.
With it you can evaluate
and make decisions.
It gives YOU the power
to say "yes"
or to say "no."
You will recognize things
for what they truly are.

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Foreword

I have had a chance to read *TV Interactive Toys: The New High Tech Threat to Children* and am delighted to have the opportunity to say a few words that might encourage the use of this book to motivate caring adults to do something about the shame of children's television.

I am impressed with the thoroughness, the appropriate quotes from television people who should know better, the face-saving pronouncements of the government regulators, and the definitiveness of psychologists and other observers of the human scene. Pamela Tuchscherer has dug into the roots of our aggressive, ready-to-fight society and has found that increased incidence of truculence parallels the increased amount of raw violence to which our impressionable children are exposed. We have allowed our children to watch the TV willy-nilly assuming that the big TV stations "wouldn't let our children see anything that wasn't good for them; or would they?"

I was told in some psychology class years ago that we all needed to "act out" anger or we would have hypertension or an ulcer. It was normal to become angry occasionally, but we needed to express it in some socially acceptable way. That was fine: write angry letters to the editor, hammer a nail, win at chess or some more active sport.

But do we teach our children these substitutes for primal, animal violence? No. We teach them, or more properly, we allow them to learn, that it is okay to shoot or stab your adversary. Is that what our society wants of our adults? The citizens of other countries know of our love for aggression, and they are alternately fearful and incredulous. We did carve our nation out of a hostile wilderness and the "wimps" were ridiculed. Is it genetic? Is there a type A (for Active Aggressor) gene that pushed the bearer to these shores to prove something?

I'm a fairly relaxed, easy-to-get-along-with conciliatory adult. My boyhood chum and I spent hour after exhausting

hour shooting each other with our fingers and then coming back to life. "I'm a new man. Bang." It was fun and we got plenty of exercise riding our compliant horses through the mountains of our backyards.

But the scene has changed. We have violent comics and we have killer TV. We give our children all the trappings of combat (real bullets next?) and they assume it is okay with us. My daughter and son-in-law know of the evils of condoning violence so it was NO WAR TOYS for gifts. Of course, our grandchildren used their fingers, carrots, pencils and soon would only wear combat clothes. They waited to be drafted from age 5 to 10 years. Our grandchildren, males and females alike, have been programmed to believe that there is but one way to control an adversary: BLAST 'EM! Where did they learn this response? You guessed it: TV. (In all fairness they have modified their attitudes as they have gained insight from the teaching of their parents who are concerned and caring. Sports, drama, academics and reading are their choices now.)

I used to think that sugar was the catalyst which led our people to surliness and anti-social behavior. That's a part of it for some, but Pamela Tuchscherer has shown us the real adversary—violence on TV.

With the facts she has given us in this book, we can now march to our legislators, our television stations, and our churches and show a little controlled violence of our own.

We are human beings and we need to learn to interact with other human beings. We cannot do that with a machine. As we grow up, we need thoughtful, caring adults who will show us the way to deal with the world and the people in it.

Lendon H. Smith, M.D.
Pediatric Counselor
Author—
Feed Your Kids Right
Encyclopedia of Baby and Child Care

"...children who already sit and watch too much television certainly do not need more reasons to become interactive with television."
Dr. William Dietz

Introduction

New High Tech Toys—Have They Gone Too Far?

Sitting down with the paper one evening, I read an article describing new battlefields that were to be laid out in family living rooms. I learned of new television interactive toys that will allow children to use hand-held toy weapons to shoot the bad guys on TV, toy warships which will be activated by inaudible cues, and plastic soldiers operated by flashes of light. These signals were actually going to be coming into the living room, emanating from the television set. My initial reaction was that this new power gives television programming more control over children than it already has.

Our children are no longer sideline viewers of television violence. With toys in hand, they become an active part of the program. This link-up of working war toys with violent television programming is a child psychiatrist's nightmare. The combination encourages children to actively role-play aggressors and defenders in futuristic battle scenes.

"Our research and that of many others makes it extremely clear that violent cartoons and war toys teach antisocial behavior and fighting to normal children," ex-

plains Thomas Radecki, M.D., practicing psychiatrist at the University of Illinois School of Medicine and chairperson of the National Coalition on Television Violence. "Interactive war toys are another clear escalation in the intensity of violence."

Do we want our children to absorb these images and actions? For just as a child gleans his parents' mannerisms, he can also acquire the television hero's violent patterns of behavior, especially if he's actively participating in the on-screen action with his own weapon.

These ideas and patterns of behavior are seen in the games children play and in their methods of solving conflict. As they imitate the television characters who are rewarded for aggressive behavior, they learn the language of guns.

As a parent and editor of a national newsletter for early childhood educators, I have spent the last three years sharing information on the benefits of pro-social interaction. This includes not only verbal interaction between children and between children and adults, but the development of such important social skills as sharing, helping one another, and resolving conflicts creatively. By teaching this type of cooperation, parents and teachers enhance children's self-esteem while fostering social awareness and responsibility.

The influx of violent cartoons and war toys began to flood the market in the early 1980s, undermining the efforts of parents and teachers to model and teach these pro-social skills. Now we have television interactive toys, new products which will allow our children to have hands-on practice in shooting their enemies away.

Speaking with Dr. Thomas Radecki, I learned that a survey was sent to aggression researchers around the nation asking their opinion of how interactive war toys would affect children. Because of the dynamics of role playing, and from the description of the toys themselves, eight out of ten thought that interactive toys would be more likely to have a harmful effect on children. The children would be involved in and rehearsing violent acts at home.

The other question we need to ask is, "Do these 'full-length commercials,' targeted directly at our vulnerable children, violate the public interest?"

As parents, teachers, and individuals concerned about children, we have choices: 1) we can buy these new interactive toys and not worry about their effects on our children; 2) we can ignore this new insult to kids by the toy industry profit makers and hope they and the new technology go away; or 3) we can seek to educate ourselves and learn about this new link-up of violent toys with children's television—learn what's really going on and what we can do about it.

For myself, I have chosen to do the latter. I have simply had enough. Yes, I'm guilty of ignoring the previous controversies surrounding violent war toys and violence on television. Even though I wrote an article on the subject, I was never really as concerned as I should have been. I thought I could protect *MY* children from these influences. But I can't. Simply sheltering them isn't enough. The discovery that violent toys can now be activated by invisible TV signals on public airwaves was the straw that broke the camel's back. Suddenly I realized that the problem wasn't going to go away by itself.

After studying the research done by experts on the related topics of role playing, violence on television, and violent toys, I became committed.

After learning the inside story about big business, big government, and how big dollars are strategically being milked from parents through their children, I became an advocate.

We have a large investment in our children. Do we want to turn over control to interactive toy manufacturers and broadcasters who want to involve kids in this new form of participatory violence?

As Dr. Radecki said, "We are looking at the mental and moral well-being of children. We can't wait around to see what is going to happen."

So my request of you is to read this book and learn about the new products which are available to your children; learn how children will role-play the behaviors and attitudes of new television images; and discover how this can affect them. But equally as important, read on in the book and see how you can learn to help your children be critical viewers of television, knowledgeable of creative problem solving and capable of looking outward to alternative means of enjoyment and excitement in living.

We must arm our children with knowledge, rather than guns.

Part I

"When you are watching TV, you are not daydreaming, or reading, or looking out the window at the world. You have opened your mind, and someone else's daydreams have entered...Once their images are inside you, they imprint upon your memory."

Jerry Mander

Chapter 1

Television Images Are Forever

The newest images to children's programming, in the form of *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* and *Saber Riders and the Star Sheriffs*, add a divergent dimension to television viewing. Instead of passively viewing the program, children will join these characters in their futuristic battles.

According to aggression researchers, these battles and rehearsals of violent acts in the home will have a harmful effect on children. Dr. Radecki of the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV) has found *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* to be the most violent program he has ever seen. "During the first two programs we monitored, there was an average of one attempted murder every 30 seconds and a killing every minute." He has also found in a study of young children that there was a trend toward increased physical aggression and antisocial behavior after playing with the Captain Power toys.

To understand the concept of how television violence encourages aggressive behavior, we need to take a closer look at television images and how they affect children. We

also need to be aware of children's understanding of reality and fantasy, their viewing habits, and their role-playing behaviors.

Reality vs. Fantasy

Can children separate what is real and what is fantasy?

Young children often look at television and see real people and view what they are doing as real—they therefore assume the program is real.[1] Parents can explain that the characters and the situation are pretend or made-up. However, this is a difficult concept for children to remember and often has superficial meaning.

For as Jerry Mander, author of *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, points out, "Seeing things on television as false and unreal is learned."[2] As public relations and advertising executive for 15 years, he learned the intricacies of persuasion and methods of influencing people. Slowly he recognized the omnipresence of television and the problems that arise when televised images overwhelm those images of reality. "Only after the image is ingested can it be noted as unreal, and by then it's too late. It doesn't work. The images are already stored in the brain, with all the other images." These images run through children's dreams and occupy their minds whether they are real or not.

Our 4-year-old son often asks us to help confirm what is real and what is not when watching television. Not too long ago we watched a special on dinosaurs that showed animated creatures. After the program was over he asked, "Are those real dinosaurs?" Even though we had talked about dinosaurs and he often mentioned that they don't live anymore, he was still confused by the well-disguised mechanical creatures.

Two studies of interest dealing with children's concept of reality and fantasy were done by Aimee Dorr and Thomas Bever. Aimee Dorr, Ph.D. at UCLA, studied students from kindergarten through sixth grade to see what they meant when they said something was "real" and how

they decided what was "real" on TV. She found that up until the third grade children had difficulty explaining what "real" meant. She also found that some children did not evaluate a show in its entirety as plausible or not. Six or 7-year-olds generally knew that television programs were "made-up." However, the more plausible a show appeared, whether fantasy or not, the more likely it would be taken as a representative of what could happen. It was found "television content and its reality are thought about primarily in terms of incidents, events, or actions carried out by characters."[3]

According to Neala Schwartzberg, Ph.D., research psychologist, "Children may understand that what they see is made-up, but that does not stop them from believing it anyway. It now appears that even programs that are obviously fantasy can be judged by children as at least partly real."[4]

Thomas Bever, who had worked with child psychologist Piaget, and three other researchers did a study to find out what children thought about commercials. Bever and his group based their study on Piaget's distinctions that there are two ways of seeing the world: the figurative (we think what we see is true), and the operational (we test our own ideas out in the real world and see if they are really true). They found that most 5- and 6-year-olds had difficulty explaining the difference between reality and fantasy. Also, most could not distinguish between make-believe and lying, although they sensed there was a difference. "Most of the young children we studied appeared to regard all television content as entertainment. They often confused programs with commercials and were unable to tell the difference between fantasy and reality in either."[5]

Imitating Images

The other day a mother told me how her 4-year-old son sat entranced watching *Pee Wee's Playhouse*. He watched Pee Wee visit the lively characters inside his fantasy-ridden

refrigerator and created a salad with lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, cauliflower and hair (which turned out to be sprouts). As soon as the program was turned off, her son headed off to the kitchen announcing he was going to make a salad—"which is a healthy snack."

"I was pleased Travis picked up this positive message from the television, yet it made me realize how vulnerable he is to role-playing what he sees. It worries me that he might imitate a violent or negative characteristic he sees on television and not take time to think out the consequences of his actions."

We know from experience that small children model their behavior on what they see—both in real life images and televised images. They automatically imitate characteristics of parents, siblings and peers and it has been found that children as young as two or three imitate televised models as frequently as they do live models.[6] Unfortunately, the behavioral characteristics imitated are not always of the positive nature and can include undesirable mannerisms ranging from reading at the breakfast table to aiming and firing at a friend with a lazer gun.

What images of life do violent cartoons re-create for children? Most dramatization involves topics such as hate, fear, competitiveness and violence. These images are presented by producers because television is better suited to express them; they can be communicated through body movement. In retrospect, the expression of friendship and loyalty (which plays a small part of the programming) requires the view of hugs, subtle facial characteristics, and expressions of caring. Unfortunately, these characteristics are not as easily demonstrated on a television screen and are often overlooked by children.[7]

Dr. Schwartzberg, explains how TV shapes kids' thoughts in her article, "What TV Does for Kids," (*Parents*, June 1987). "Unfortunately, the images children see through the TV 'window' are so vivid and convincing that they affect their thoughts and ideas, the kinds of topics they talk about,

and the games they play. The greater the consistencies in those images, in the 'reality' presented, the greater the effects." When answering the question, "Why do attempts to balance violence with pro-social messages fail?" she responds, "The words and implications will be overlooked in their quest for and focus on the action. They are not apt to discount what they see if it seems plausible, even if television presents a distortion. And if they see characters they enjoy watching using violence to solve problems, they will view violence as an acceptable problem-solving method."

A psychiatrist who has very definite ideas on violent television programming and interactive toys is Dr. Thomas Radecki. "This repeated teaching of seeing your opponent as someone despicably evil who can only be dealt with through combat is very harmful. The research on cartoon violence and violent toys is quite clear. These programs and their violent war toys are teaching children to be more violent and desensitizing them to the real horrors of war and military combat."[8]

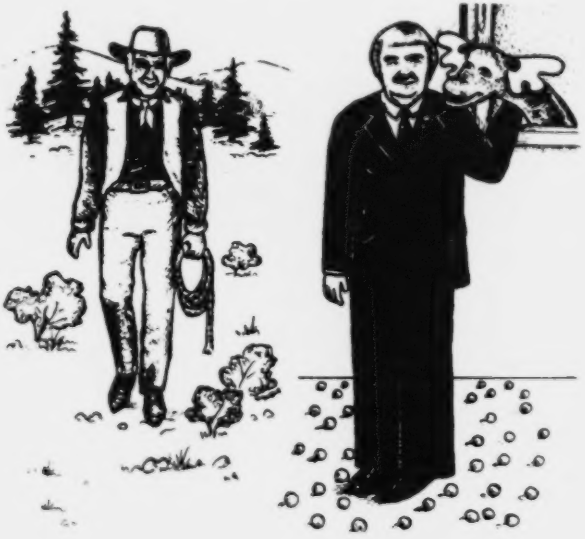
"Although the children will be involved in and rehearsing the aggressive activity at home, the average parent may not observe closely enough to notice the impact on attitudes and behavior," Radecki noted. "As with other studies done, the increase in anti-social behavior may be subtle. But if parents stand back and watch over a period of time, the effect can really add up and have a major impact."

Building a Reservoir of Images

We have to look at the fact that when a child sits down in front of "the box" it is not as though his mind is empty. Instead of daydreaming or creating his own images, his mind is being filled with the thoughts and images presented on TV. These images are imprinted on his memory.[9]

For example, bring to mind the following characters: Captain Kangaroo, Ben Cartwright, Rod Sterling, "The Fonz", Laverene and Shirley. Did you make images? If so, the characters are a part of your memory.

One television image I particularly remember is from a specific episode of *Twilight Zone*. The story dealt with a hospital staff and a young girl who was having facial reconstruction. The operation, to correct her deformity, had been attempted previously without success. The climax of the show came when the bandages were removed and the patient's face was shown. As the camera zoomed in for us to view the removal of the last pieces of gauze, it was revealed that the girl had human characteristics, yet the operation was a failure. It was only then that the facial features of the hospital staff were clearly revealed showing grotesque pig like characteristics. I was in elementary school, yet today I can easily visualize the shocking view of those horrible-looking doctors and nurses. I knew at the time that this show was a fantasy, but the images have remained vivid in my memory for over 20 years as well as the lesson that beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder.



Images From The Past

Commandeering Real Life Observations and Interactions

In *Four Arguments For the Elimination of Television*, Mander looks at the importance of knowledge and how television commandeers this knowledge away from children.

> Knowledge results from personal experience and direct observation— seeing, sharing, touching, tasting and and smelling. These are aided by several inward systems....In addition there are feelings, which may have been informed by prior experience. All of these—the five senses plus instinct, intuition, feeling and thought—combine to produce conscious awareness, the ability to perceive and describe the way the world is organized.(p.79)

People who use all their senses are thought of as being sensitive. But what of the child who spends an average of 20-30 hours a week in front of the television? He misses out on social experiences such as the sharing of ideas through conversation, learning to take a friend's point of view, or learning when it's time to listen. He will also miss out observing other aspects of his environment in the home and outside.

Heavy television viewers have their social and natural observational time reduced and replaced with emphasis on mental agility, persuasiveness, charm, guile and aggression. When this occurs certain senses of that individual are altered. Senses interact, reminds Mander. "As with other systems, when one thing is altered, the overall balance is altered. Changes in one aspect of human perception or experience affect all others."

Speaking with Larry Rosenkoetter, Professor of Psychology at Bethany College in Kansas, I learned of his research study on the moral development of children. It dealt with how young children deal with right and wrong, in relationship with their advanced thinking skills and the amount of television that they watched. He found that, of the kindergarteners he studied, those who watched the most television were less advanced in knowing right from wrong.

"My suspicion is not that television teaches right from wrong, but that it is the lack of gaining other skills, such as lack of interaction with parents and the lack of give and take of peer play, which influences this behavior."

This problem of children's lessening social involvement with their peers is also a concern of Dr. William Dietz, chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Children and Television and professor at Tufts University Medical School. "The new proposed television-activated toys increase passivity in children." He thinks children who already sit and watch too much television certainly do not need more reasons to become interactive with television. "Children, instead, need to become more interactive with other children."

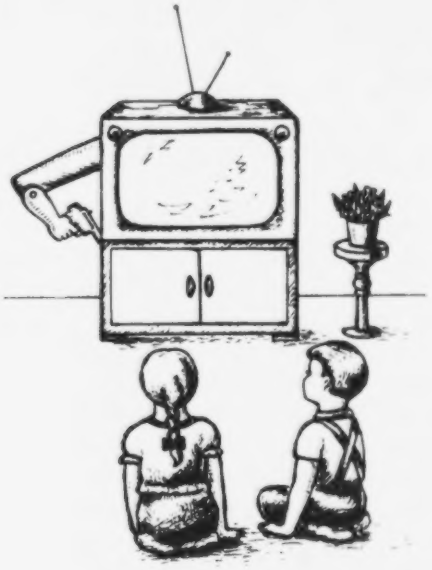
New Stress for Children?

Images, both good and bad, also have a biological role in our lives. In the book, *Seeing with the Minds Eye*, authors Nancy Samuels and Mike Samuels present evidence that neurophysiologists are able to trace the pathways of images from the brain into the cells. Our bodies react to images in ways similar to how they react to the external world. For example, swimmers and other athletes can use mental images to rehearse their competitive role. It has also been found that when people create images they can activate their involuntary nervous system, causing changes in heart rate, blood pressure, and smooth muscle tension.[10]

A question to be raised when dealing with the new interactive toys is, "Will children experience physiological stress responses to the threat of having their toy being shot at and to their role as protector defending their possession?"

Approximately 10 million children sit down to watch television on a Saturday morning[11]. They will all be absorbing the images placed in front of them and, in the case of new interactive programming, actually taking part in the pro-

gram's violent scenes. Consider that these same 10 million children could be detached from the television, thinking their own thoughts, socializing with a friend, working with a family member, or developing their own sense of wonder and observation out-of-doors.



What images will today's television imprint on our children's memories?

"...these vehicles can be aimed at the television screen and exchange fire with on-screen enemies..."
Mattel Toys News Release

Chapter 2

TV Interactive Toys

When children sit down to watch children's programming, odds are they will be watching a toy-linked program. It may be as mundane as ABC's *The Care Bear Family*, as controversial as CBS's new *Garbage Pail Kids* or as violent as NBC's *Lazer Tag*. Now we can add *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* and *Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs*.

These two new programs, which will be syndicated on local independent stations, will have a new twist—they will be interactive. Children can activate trigger-equipped power jets and spaceships to shoot at the television and the television can activate the toy.

As children learn the characteristics of these prized interactive toys through advertising and peers, they may begin to believe in the product message and impress on their parents what will be the "in" toy for the coming Christmas season.

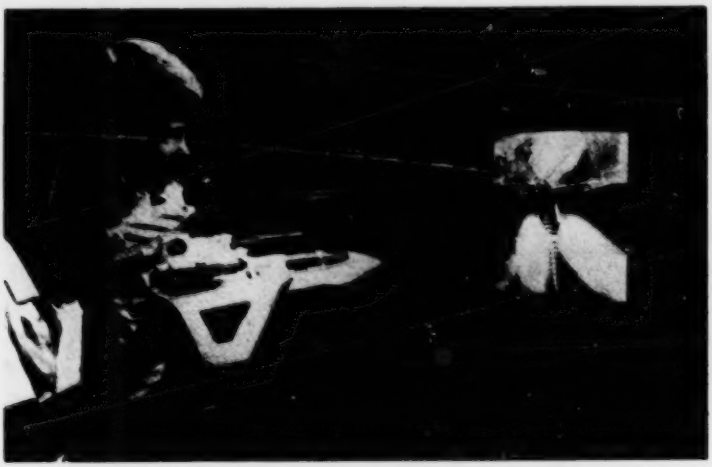
Soldiers of the Future

Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future is produced by Mattel's subsidiary, MTS Productions. This program, created and trademarked by Landmark Entertainment Group, features live action combined with computer animations similar to the movie "The Last Star Fighter."[1]

It's the 21st century on the planet Earth, which is controlled by the Bio Dread Empire. Lurking about is the Empire's leader Lord Dread and his evil computer creatures.

Who will save the earth? Captain Power and the soldiers of the future. Their mission: a couragous quest to save the earth and the most precious resource of all—life itself.

Children who want to take an active role in facing the adventure along side the heroes, Captain Power, Major Hawk Masterson (air assault expert), and Lt. Tank Ellis (ground assault specialist), can purchase 4" action figures (equipped with high tech weapons) and the PowerJet XT-7. Those who want to side with the enemy—Lord Dread and his side-kicks, Soaron Sky Sentry (assault warlord) and Blastarr Ground Guardian (the ground attack warlord)—can purchase corresponding figures and the Phantom Striker Jet.



Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future
Phantom Striker (Top) and PowerJet XT-7 (Bottom)

Photo supplied courtesy of Mattel Toys. CAPTAIN POWER and associated trademarks are owned by Landmark Entertainment Group. Landmark Entertainment Group 1986.

Both hand-held weapons can allow children to shoot light impulses at on-screen enemies from up to 10 feet away and score points each time the target is hit. Their enemy can return fire—similar to an electronic duel. The child can defend himself by firing at the on-screen projectiles, thus neutralizing them. If he is unsuccessful and misses, his toy may take an enemy hit and suffer imaginative damage effects resulting in losing points.

The child starts off with five points and must keep the score above zero. If the score does reach zero, the jet "blows up" and the pilot is ejected onto the floor. These interactions will take place throughout the program.

There is also toy-to-toy interaction where children can aim at their friend's jet from up to 20 feet away or participate in solo target practice with a special reflector.

Mattel's representative Spenser Boise explains that the jets and accessories, such as the Interlocker (the anti-aircraft throne of Lord Dread) and Power Base (Captain Power's battle fortress), range from $30 to $40. They can be operated independently or with special "battle and training" VHS format video cassettes that have 15 minutes of interactive footage and chase footage, as well as "Power On" scenes. These cassettes are sold separately.

A provocative toy also available is the Power On Energizer which comes with a 4" Captain Power figure and is activated by the television program. "When the Captain Power live action character stands on his energy transfer unit during the show and gives his 'Power On' battle cry, the child's accessory will illuminate, sound off and send a light beam through the Captain Power action figure. Once activated, the Power On Energizer will cause other vehicles within range to gain or lose points."[2]

Frontier Freedom Fighters

"A futuristic fantasy with a western twist" is one description of the new animated series *Saber Rider and the*

Star Sheriffs. It is produced by World Events, the company that made the highly successful *Voltron—Defender of the Universe*. In the program the hero, Saber Rider, and three teen-age frontier freedom fighters wage the battle for justice and liberty against the Outriders (galaxy's ruthless "vapor beings") and their gang of gigantic outlaw Renegades. These evil beings, lead by a demon-looking Nemesis, confront the young defenders in high tech futuristic action.

The children will also be drawn into the world of Saber Rider by watching Bronco Buster Road Rally cars and turbo-charged Silver Stallions transport the heroes through their adventures. It is a Bronco Buster vehicle which children will purchase to interact with the television. "It will use infared waves and work like remote control in reverse," according to Paul Roberts, president of Impulse toys. The Bronco Buster will come with a signal decoder to fit onto the TV and a 3¾" character.

Interactive Vehicles and Action Figures from *Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs*
Used by permission from Impulse Toys

The child will use his weapon to shoot at the enemy on the screen. A scoreboard on the back of the Bronco Buster will keep a record of the points gained and lost throughout different energy level games. This record will be accompanied by lights and sounds from the weapon.

A child can become an official "Star Sheriff" by purchasing an electronic badge which will light up and sound off with a signal from the television set. When it displays the signal, it will tell the new frontier fighter that he is in trouble and needs to grab his Bronco Buster.

Commanding the Tech Force

Another program which was scheduled to air in the fall of 1987, but was canceled because of high production costs, was *Tech Force and the Moto Monsters*. However, makers of this toy, Axlon, will still have Tech Force and the Moto Monsters toys available at stores around the country.

The basic set includes PROGs (programmable robots)—plastic battery-powered monsters that will be interactive among themselves and orchestrated by two computer consoles. Each child can use the consoles to have radio-control command over 8 individually controlled "Progs." With 2 consoles, there is then a possible total of 16 "Progs", all in play at one time. One player can challenge the other, either in real time conflict or in waves of strategically programmed maneuvers.

One of the intricate accessories in this set is the TriTech Defense Tower. It is the target for the Techforce troop. "Each time the Tower is hit, it rotates to avoid further attacks. The Tower makes increasingly alarming sounds with each successful hit, finally exploding and ejecting all its contents."[3]

"The child is in command of technology," Phil Quigley, Vice-president of Merchandising explained. "It's a **learning tool**, for a child can start by pushing buttons and program movements and progress to creating games. It's a creative

process which helps develop action and strategy gaming skills."

The toys are marketed for children 8 and up and are priced at $200 to $250. Quigley notes, "The child who gets this toy will probably need to lobby their parents—however new technology is always expensive. But it's exciting."

Multimillion Dollar Plans

Producers of both *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* and *Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs* contend that the shows will stand on their own and that the interactive technology is meant to *enrich* the viewing experience. It is interesting that they also mention the interactive toys will be at the forefront of the high tech rage, come Christmas time and are both backed by multimillion dollar advertising campaigns.

It should also be noted that Mattel's recommended age limit for their new toys is 7 plus years, because of the complexity of use. However, there is no age limit on the viewing age of the program. Susan Kalishman, Public Relations Director of World Events, points out that the target audience for *Saber Rider and the Star Sheriffs* and the accompanying toy is children 5-12. However, it should be noted that the media kit sent to broadcasters promotes this program as "Exactly the program you need to draw exactly the audience you want, kids ages two to eleven."

"This is our technology and it has endless possibilities," Kalishman contends. "We are continually fine tuning it."

Ironically, rather than "endless possibilities," more of the same is planned for your children in 1988 when World Events will introduce their new violent interactive show, *Vytor-The Starfire Champion*.

"...we have allowed the content of one of our most powerful tools ever created to be controlled by the quest for profit rather than for excellence."
Neala S Schwartzberg

Chapter 3

A New Link-up for Sales

The link-up between television broadcasters and toy manufacturers is easy to understand when one looks at the financial incentives. The manufacturers' influence will be strengthened by priceless exposure, and the broadcasters will get a built-in audience. This was proven in past years when the *He-Man* program helped to sell over $1 billion worth of toys.[1]

In the article "Creeping Commercialism: Is the Toy Business Taking Over Kids' TV?" (*TV Guide*, June 13, 1987), David Diamond reported on this relationship between toy companies and broadcasters. He found Hasbro, Inc. subsidized the cost of producing *G.I. Joe*, *Jem*, and the *Transformers* (three of the top kids' syndicated TV shows) with money coming from Hasbro's $217-million marketing budget. Robert Hubbell, Hasbro's vice-president for investor relations, explained that the toy-based shows are unlike most TV programs, for they aren't expected to make money. They are rather a part of the overall marketing effort. "The point is, they're not designed to produce revenues per se."

With this type of competition it is not surprising that producers of programs not affiliated with toy companies find it difficult to compete.

To Serve or Sell

How do programs with advertised images compare to programs with no toy tie in? Advertising expert, Mander, suggests the following: "In a sense, the advertising images are more real than other television images because you get to see the image 'live' right in your supermarket." You get the image from television, file it and then see it at the store and recognize it. The image from the screen materializes on the shelf. "Advertisers are the alchemists of our day."[2]

It is this situation, putting the broadcasters in the toy business, that infuriates Peggy Charren, president of the nonprofit Action for Children's Television (ACT). This children's programming watchdog group contends that the interactive television toys don't meet the public interest standards, since the signal is only available to some viewers. Charren points out, "It creates two classes of television viewers, the kids who can afford the toys and those who cannot. The broadcasters are licensed to serve the public interest. They aren't doing that if they allow only a select portion to have the interactive power; they have licensed it only for people with money. The problem is Mattel and others have made the program into a video game and haven't supplied the joy stick."

Charren likened the commercialism of television programming to the public libraries displaying manufacturers' catalogs. "Even if the catalogs were bright colors, children could learn to read from them, and if they had titles like 'Don't Walk with Strangers,' it would not be classified censorship if they were asked to remove the catalogs from the shelves. This sales pitch for toys wouldn't be in the public interest."

Claiming the interactive shows are for commercial profit which violates public interest, and that "the programming takes unfair advantage of its child audience," the ACT petitioned the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) (on February 9, 1987) either to issue a declaratory ruling that

such programs violate the public interest or to hold an inquiry on the matter.[3] It's important to note that the FCC approved the television link-up, which uses electronic impulses, months previously—without input from consumers. In fact, when Mattel presented their plans to the FCC for approval, the FCC's initial response was that they were disappointed that Mattel brought only the demo tape and not any of the toys.

Frieda Thyden is the senior attorney for the FCC and is handling the children's issue of television activated programming. She explained they received FCC approval because any sound emitted to activate the toys were indistinguishable from the sounds pertaining to the action on the screen. This confirms it is the technical use of television the FCC acts upon, not the program content.

Another alternative request from ACT was that the FCC rule that broadcasting licenses for these programs require their interspersing the broadcasts with announcements informing children that the program is also an effort to promote the sale of products seen or used in the story.[3]

Thyden responded to this issue by asking, "Wouldn't 8- or 9-year-olds use this announcement as a means of learning that the toys are available and head to the nearest toy store and purchase the toy?"

Time will tell if these petitions will be acted upon. As it stands, there has been no formal decision on the petition and there is no set date on which a decision is to be made. The Commission tries not to allow the backlog of petitions to get too large, but Thyden noted that the ACT submitted another petition in January 1986 and it had not been decided on over a year later.

Thyden claims, "Children's television programming is a tough subject." She adds that as a parent, she and other members of the Commission are concerned about what their children watch on television. Yet, there is the legal issue which must be attended to—that of the First Amendment, which deals with censorship. "I try to look at the total picture

and see that television can be educational. However, as a parent, I am responsible for what my children watch and would like to be available to sit down and watch shows with my children and be able to discuss questions which arise. If I am unable to be available, then I am responsible to see that the child will not watch a program I feel is inappropriate for her. It will be up to parents to take a positive role in guiding their children's action, for the law is firm on censorship."

Laissez Faire of the Airwaves

"The acceptance of this new toy technology makes it clear that the Federal Communications Commission is content to let toy companies and broadcast companies use airwaves as billboards for selling products to children," stated Dr. William Dietz, chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Children and Television. "Parents need to take on the responsibility—it is the only solution, for the FCC is in a deregulatory mode and the government will not help."

This stand on allowing product-based shows has not always held true. The change came with the appointment of Mark Fowler as FCC chairman in 1980. He fervently declared, "I take an absolute approach to all attempts to control the content of broadcasting. They're censorship."[4] He guided the FCC to lift its children's television program guidelines, and by 1984 unlimited commercial time on TV programs was allowed—bringing forth the influx of current toy based shows.[5]

Who said, "Television is just another appliance. It's a toaster with pictures?"

It was Fowler, the man in charge of the nation's 1,090 TV stations.[6] During his reign, Fowler believed the FCC was ultimately moving towards a regulation-free telecommunication marketplace. His motto, "Let the market place decide," would allow competitors to offer facilities con-

strained only by imagination and capital marketing. "Regulation's role as a surrogate for competition will be completely unnecessary and our children will be the benefactors."[7]

Dennis Patrick became the new FCC chairman in April 1987. Patrick has said he will continue the current trend toward First Amendment rights. He has made no separate comments on children's programming and probably will not until the proposed fall hearings in the legislature dealing with children's television programming and commercialism.

Dr. Radecki, chairperson of the National Coalition on Television Violence, notes that there are now 29 war cartoon series financed by various toy companies to sell war toys, and another six due in the fall of 1987. His stand on this issue is revealed when he states, "Toy companies are making a serious mistake using children's programming as 30-minute commercials for violent toys. Such activity is unethical, used to be illegal before 1982, and should once again be prohibited."[8]

John Murray, Ph.D. and head of the Kansas State University Department of Human Development and Family Studies, also believes marketing interactive toys is a very unwise move. "It sacrifices our children's welfare for a few dollars. It adds a stronger component, combining the viewing and the role-playing of violence."[9]

"...Reilly told the advertising companies how to penetrate family defenses. He explained children's vulnerabilities and suggested how to use them."
Robert B. Choate

Chapter 4

Secrets

Over the years there have been many ways of learning how children respond to advertising. Some knowledge is gained through research by scholars and other facts and insights have been revealed by "motivational research houses" which solicit children for testing and find out about the appeal of the product.

Major companies have done their own studies on mass commercial communication and child manipulation—however, they've seldom, if ever, publicized these findings to the public or child advocate groups such as ACT.[1]

Let the Child Beware

In the book *The Best Things On TV: Commercials*, author Jonathan Price notes when testing the market, these companies might take new commercials on a tour of movie theaters, advertising a 25-cent show with magicians, clowns, and prizes and then ask the audience to fill out questionnaires in which they pick out the toy they like best. David Chagall, a writer for *TV Guide*, described a session where children watched some commercials followed by a cartoon and then more commercials. After filling out a questionnaire, they were finally shown the main attraction. When the program ended, the children were informed that the first questionnaires had been "lost" or "ruined" by a clown. In order to qualify for the special drawing, the children had to complete

another questionnaire. "By comparing the results of the second set of commercials to the first, as well as to 'control' commercials whose selling power is already known, the researchers can determine which new commercials are the strongest child persuaders."

According to Price, "Any company that sells to kids pays for research, but keeps its results secret, in order to beat competitors." Most findings are kept locked in confidential files marked 'Proprietary Information—Trade Secrets.'[2]

Undermining Family Resistance

Robert Choate, author of "The Politics of Change," (*Children and the Faces of Television*, Academic Press: 1980) described another advertising methodology titled, *The Child*. This research report was produced in 1973 for major corporate sponsors who sell to and through children. This text (sold at $15,000 per edition!) presents data to help companies make decisions on targeting advertising and promotion to children or parents. What at first sounds like just a marketing book contains such goals as explaining children's vulnerabilities and suggestions on how to use them. It also explains how companies can penetrate the family defenses. Regarding parent-child interaction on advertising, it was found that children from age 8 on enjoyed watching adult programming and were exposed to advertising directed primarily at adults. The report concludes, "This kind of repeated exposure to promotional messages for adult products may have important implications for development of brand awareness (and even preference) among young children, who (it should be stressed) may not actually use such products" (1977, p. 34).[3]

Choate points out, "...during the critical years of 1973-1978 the contents of *The Child*, were not available to public organizations, to CCMM [Council on Children Media and Merchandising], ACT, or even to the government." However, he notes that by order of the Federal Trade Commission's

Children Advertising Hearing Officer, dated July 16, 1979, this copyrighted material can be cited.[4]

Ripple of Reform, High Tide of Resistance

Over the years the government has failed to respond to ACT's requests and has delayed meaningful reform for children. However, in 1977 the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) launched an inquiry looking at children's advertising. A report emerged in April 1978, concentrating on Saturday morning television and suggesting a possible ban on advertising during children's programming. "The report drew immediate, heated response from the food and toy industries," according to Choate in "The Politics of Change."

The food and toy industry lobbyists then sought to cut the FTC funds and the public participation funds of ACT because of funding disagreements. They also charged that the FTC chairman, Michael Pertschuk was biased and "in the pocket of the consumer." Furthermore, legal maneuvers delayed decisions by the FTC and temporarily disqualified Pertschuk from voting on the issue.

In November 1978, the FTC launched hearings on children and television advertising and decided "unfairness" was a valid basis on which to judge commercial messages, since children could be deemed imprudent or without discretion. This, explains Choate, brought forth industry lawyers who saw the action as "opening Pandora's box" and immediately, broadcasters tried to block any further inquiry.

In response to this decision, cereal companies reduced sugar content and offered nutritional messages. The American Broadcasting Company (ABC) offered to cut Saturday morning commercials. Saturday mornings became less attractive to advertisers and many took guidance from *The Child* and aimed their advertising to family audiences, where there was less scrutiny.

In late 1979 and early 1980, the Congress was attacked by industry lobbyists as they tried to breakdown the FTC. In

the end, after committee hearings and reviews, a pliant Congress showed the industry forces had won. A ban, based on unfairness of advertising, was no longer an option for protecting children. Choate explains:

> FTC rule-making was made subject to Congressional veto without Presidential intervention; "unfairness" as a criterion for weighing advertising viewed by children was dropped from the FTC's powers. Public participation was substantially cut back. Funding for the FTC itself actually lapsed as the Congress argued about teaching all regulatory agencies a lesson. Finally, the House and Senate successfully conferenced; the FTC survived, shaken by the ordeal. (p.336)

Another Voice of Reason.....Silenced

This attitude toward children's television advertising also prompted a move to ban the use of a National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) code book, titled *The Television Code*. This self-regulating code book was available to local station managers and was established by the NAB, "...as a means of self-regulation and in order to maintain the highest possible programming and advertising standards." These codes, however, "do not dictate what programs should or should not be aired on a subscriber's own facility. This decision is the prerogative of the individual station or network."[5]

In a section of *The Television Code* titled, "II. Responsibility Toward Children," it was noted broadcasters have a special responsibility to children and, "In their totality, programs should contribute to the sound, balanced development of children to help them achieve a sense of the world at large and informed adjustments to their society." It also acknowledged that in the course of a child's development, there are numerous social factors and forces that contribute to his making the transition to adult society, television being one of these forces.

> The child's training and experience during the formative years should include positive sets of values which will allow

> the child to become a responsible adult, capable of coping with the challenges of maturity.
>
> Children should also be exposed, at the appropriate times, to a reasonable range of the realities which exist in the world sufficient to help them make the transition to adulthood. (p.3-4)[6]

It was also noted in section "IX. Presentation of Advertising—Restricted or unacceptable categories," that commercially sponsored, program-length segments consisting substantially of continuous sales demonstrations or presentations violate the voluntary code operations and are not acceptable.[7]

The Television Code was challenged in the California courts and was proven unconstitutional and pulled out of use because of its violation to the First Amendment, according to a National Broadcasting representative. As I attempted to gather information on *The Television Code*, I was informed by the NAB representatives that as part of the judicial agreement, they can give out no information or even talk about it. "It is as if it never existed."

What was former FTC chairman, Michael Pertschuk's response to the FTC's new role to stop setting standards for TV ads aimed at children? "The zone of play for business is wider, and the public is more apt to get hurt."[8]

Advocate groups will stay active, notes Choate. However, "Parents must help their children to comprehend the totality of the message in the more than 20,000 commercials per year they view."[9]

We need to remember that when television brings us "this message," it is more than just the name of violent toys, but the underlying behavioral message of violence.

"We are very careful about not giving polluted water to our children, but we allow polluted experiences."
Dr. Alberto Serrano

Chapter 5

Tangible Tools for Aggression

To more fully understand the role of television interactive toys as a threat to our children we not only have to look at the effects of television images, but also the influence of violent toys.

I recently asked a group of 5-year-olds what the word power meant to them. Their responses were:

"You have 'the power' when you destroy the enemy."

"When you win the battle."

"Power is He-Man zapping Skeletor."

Today, for many children, power is synonymous with violence. Does this violent power stay contained in the television?

At recess, 7-year-old Tyler aggravated his friend, John, by teasing him. John retaliated by trying to karate chop his friend's hand. The principal had to intervene.

In a middle class neighborhood, two groups of 10-year-old boys, dressed in camouflaged fatigues and armed with toy uzi machine guns and realistic looking hand guns, are in simulated combat. As one boy (who is supposed to be wounded) gets up, the others attack with alarming vengeance.

Aggressive and Antisocial Behavior

War toys, often called "action or fantasy" toys by the manufacturers, are used for simulating the actions of violence. They make up 11 out of the 20 best selling toys on the market today.[1] These products, lead by G.I. Joe, are not just all little toy figures, but include an arsenal of weapons including toy hand grenades, rocket launchers and lazer guns. There are also realistic reproductions of pistols, and rifles including a water machine gun that can shoot 30 feet. These toys are promoted by violent cartoon shows and movies such as *Rambo* and *Terminator*. We can now add to this list more new weapons. Aspiring young G.I. Joes can arm themselves with lazers and can use their G.I. Joe-Lazer Battle game to carry out these lessons on violence. The $29.95 kit will be decorated with the famous red-white-and-blue G.I. Joe logo in order to attract young 5- to 9-year-old shoppers' attention. This toy design came through the joint efforts of Hasbro, the seller of G.I. Joe toys, and World of Wonder—makers of Lazer Tag.

The new television interactive toys allow children first-hand practice shooting at both the television characters and correlated toys in their homes. "Interactive television programming, to a degree, is developing a setting for children which is 'situationally realistic,' similar to a play on a stage," according to Dr. Richard Suinn, head of the Department of Psychology at Colorado State University. Children are receiving actual sets of cues. This would suggest youngsters will be learning a stronger response than if they were merely fantasizing or pretending. The reason is that there is feedback; the weapon they will be holding, be it a laser gun or interactive toy, will be recording their hits and misses. "It is the feedback in this play that makes the difference between simply shooting a toy gun and using an interactive weapon."

To understand the impact of war toys, the National Coalition on Television has compiled data which is staggering

to most parents. The average American child, this year, will see some 1000 advertisements promoting war toys and will watch some 250 episodes of war cartoons produced to help sell those toys. This is equivalent to 22 days of classroom instruction time each year in exciting, proviolent entertainment. Add to this a 700 percent increase in the sales of war toys since 1982 and you have a billion dollar market which desensitizes children toward the effects of violence. Do we now need broadcasters and retailers escalating this violence by introducing television interactive toys?[2]

Behavior and Play Patterns

Growing Child Research Review (January 1987) published a study by Richard Potts of Vanderbilt University, and Aletha C. Huston and John C. Wright, both of the University of Kansas, explaining, "Short-term effects of TV violence are more likely to be found in situations where the available toys encourage rough play."

When 64 preschool boys in the study (3 years, 3 months old to 6 years, 3 months old) played with potentially aggressive toys such as Star War toys and a mechanical boxing robot, they showed some sign of nonaggressive fantasy and some turn-taking. However, they were generally more physically and verbally aggressive to the toys and to each other.[3]

"Every time we purchase a toy, we communicate our adult values to the children who receive these toys," according to Joanne Sheehan, co-author of *War Toys on the March*, published by the "Stop War Toys Campaign" centered in Norwich, Connecticut. "Do we want them to think that disputes and differences are best settled by force or that the world is divided up into good guys and bad guys?"

Unfortunately, many adults in the United States and other countries around the world are either unaware or unconcerned that they are giving approval to war attitudes,

aggression and domination—the values of these new toys. It has been shown that as children spend more time playing aggressively they take less time learning to be empathetic and cooperative toward others.

Esther Bonner, a member of Bucks County Branch of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (PA), agrees that war toys teach the worst kind of lessons to young people. For example, "Behind G.I. Joe is violence. The use of weaponry is what determines his victory...Violence begets more violence, keeps building more and more. The conqueror feels powerful. The person who has been conquered breeds vengeance. It's never ending."[4]

Pressure on Parents

Children who watch television are inundated with toy promotions and continually put pressure on their parents to buy these toys. Advertising and the very strong pressures from their children may seduce parents into permitting this type of entertainment and thus, allowing our vulnerable youth to go from playing with small toy figures to exchanging fire with the television and each other. These young children no longer have to wait to defend themselves—they take on the active role of aggressor.

Dr. Alberto Serrano, head of the department of child psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania, does not hold much sympathy for those parents who buy the toys simply to keep their children happy—especially those parents who buy violent toys against their better judgment. As medical director at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic, where troubled children are treated at a rate of 3,000 new cases a year, Dr. Serrano believes parents should supervise the toys their children play with just as they supervise the friends they play with. "We are very careful about not giving polluted water to our children, but we allow polluted experiences."[5]

Even if your children don't watch the violent cartoons

or new TV-interactive programs which display the use of war toys, they can see advertisements, read about the characters on toy packaging, or they will learn about them from friends at school.

Some experts argue that giving children toy guns is a way for them to discharge some of their natural aggression. Sheehan's response to this comment is, "Children do need to learn how to deal with aggression, but there are more constructive ways to do this than through playing with war toys. Fear, anger, and feelings of low self-esteem are often at the root of aggressive behavior, behavior that is encouraged in children by playing with war toys and watching violent TV shows. The home and school should be places where children can build their self-esteem. Their environment should encourage communication, cooperation, and the development of creative ways to solve conflicts."[6]

As parents around the country become more educated on the subject, they are reacting to the arsenal of military hardware that glut the retail toy shelves.

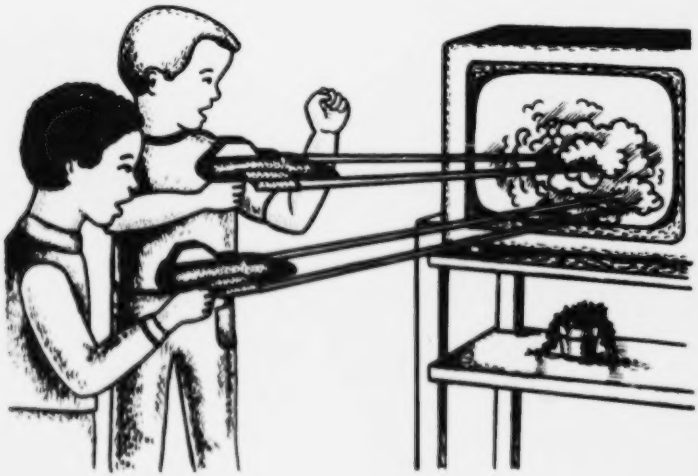
Jim and Debbie Fine's three children ages 4, 8, and 15, have no toys that zap enemies, fire missiles or are dressed in khaki. She feels there is enough violence in real life. "It's counterproductive to make it into a game. It's not fun, and it's not a game. I don't think the use of violence is a way to solve problems."[7]

What if their young son asks for a Rambo or an television activated toy? "I'm not going to get all upset about it, but I'm not going to go out and buy it for him. And I'll tell him why."

War toys are only objects. But with media demonstrating their use daily, they become the simple solution to how to handle the "bad guys"—the tangible weapons for role-playing aggression.

Lee Salk, Ph.D., clinical professor of pediatric psychology and child development at Cornell Medical Center in New York says, "The underlying concept of these [interactive] toys is teaching children to solve problems by pulling triggers. Children learn about the world and how to solve life's problems through the content of their play. In many ways it determines how we see the world."[8]

How will children solve life's problems if their play focuses on "shooting enemies" with violent toys?



From new TV interactive toys,

to Lazer Tag,

to splat guns—

(shoot paint pellets which "splat" on opponent when hit)

we are allowing our children to play their way toward
a reality which will not be a game.

"Violence does not emerge in a vacuum. It is planted by example, and continually reinforced or extinguished by experience."
David Mantell

Chapter 6

Toy Weapons with Real Consequences

When one realizes how quickly a child grows and learns his language and his society's values, the reality hits that there is little time to make mistakes.

Research has revealed that children show quite a bit of consistency in their play behaviors and television viewing styles by 3 or 4 years of age, indicating that personality and social interaction tendencies are already fairly well established by these ages.[1] Also, it's been found that for boys, the relationship between viewing television violence at the age of 9 and their level of aggressive behavior at age 19 is significant.[2] Thus television viewing can have a major impact on the types of social behavior they will display as adolescents and adults.

As children grow older, what do they do with this acquired desire for and skill in using violent toys?

It is evident by looking at many local papers that "playing with guns" is not a pastime exclusively for children; teenagers and adults are engrossed in the activity of "shooting" at one another as a means of entertainment. Throughout the country the realism of these toys is causing problems. Police have been summoned by concerned citizens who see

children and adults brandishing toys that are made to look and sound like authentic weapons.

It was reported that in New York City about a dozen such look-alike guns are recovered annually in incidents involving assaults on police officers alone. Ironically, these are often used in pranks or are thoughtlessly brandished in public and not used with the intent to commit a crime. In Virginia there is a campaign aimed at requiring all reproductions of guns to be painted bright yellow. This was prompted by a case of a young man nearly being shot by a police officer after pointing what appeared to be a .22-caliber Luger at the officer.[3]

Jerald Vaugh, executive director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, based in Alexandria, Virginia, is very much aware that these guns are a national problem. "The toy is treated exactly as the real thing when police officers are called in such incidents. It's a potential disaster waiting to happen."[4]

"Shoot or Be Shot" Game Ends in Tragedy

This disaster did happen on the evening of April 7, 1987. Lazer Tag's realism cost a young player his life. As Leonard Falcon, 19, of Rancho Cucamonga, California, was playing Lazer Tag with friends, he was mistakenly shot by a deputy who had come to the school to look for reported armed prowlers in the area. Falcon had jumped out from behind some bushes in the dark, assumed a shooting stance and "fired" his flashing electronic laser toy at the deputy. In a hundredth of a second, the deputy had to make a decision. He reacted to the flash of light from the toy gun—resembling the flash from a real pistol—by shooting Falcon with his shotgun. This was not police violence, but the result of a responsible police officer reacting to flashes from a gun in a hundredth of a second.

A sad post-commentary to this story is that Falcon's father recalled he had once refused to replace a broken toy

gun for Leonard's 12-year-old brother because of a shooting four years ago in Orange County in which a Stanton policeman killed a 5-year-old boy who brandished a toy weapon in a darkened apartment.[5]

It's important to point out that the toy lazer gun Falcon was playing with was not an exact replica of a real gun nor was it what the policeman identified as the cause for defensive action. The policeman reacted to a sequence of events where Falcon role-played an aggressor with a shooting stance and the sight of a flash of light coming from a hand-held object.

This type of role playing will be promoted by interactive television programming. The question arises, "Will these toys show a flash of light when viewed in the dark?" When I asked the interactive toy companies' representatives, Impulse Toy's response was, "No," and Mattel's response was, "No comment."

Striking Back

Bob Staake is a free lance cartoonist who asked political cartoonists for newspapers to "go after war toys armed with pen and ink." Maureen Zegel of *Parenting for Peace and Justice* interviewed him and discovered a new found supporter of her cause.[6]

> He (Staake) recently got a call from a father, a Vietnam veteran, who prefaced his story by saying that until recently he was a father who believed that his children were not harmed by toy guns and violent play.
>
> "But this guy said he bought this new game called Lazer Tag," recalled Staake. "He was playing with his kid and the guns shoot a light ray. You wear a chest badge of some kind that actually has a target. Well, he hit his kid's target and this beeper went off. The guy had a flashback and he thought to himself, 'My God, I've just killed my son.'"
>
> The father wanted to tell Staake that he supported his efforts asking parents to boycott war toys.

Staake claims he is not out to get the toy industry. "We believe they have every right to make this garbage. What we

ask is that parents boycott—that they refuse to buy those war toys."

Spreading the Language of Guns

With the coming of the *Saber Rider and the Star Sheriff* series, children in Mexico, Central and South America will be able to "wage battle for liberty and justice in a bold new way." The program will be distributed by Cintelba S.A. of Buenos Aires which anticipates the initiation of an aggressive merchandising program for the territory on behalf of "Saber Rider" products. "We are delighted to be able to bring the spirit of the American West—always popular in Central and South America—to life for Spanish speaking children," said Horacio Arguello, Cintelba's General Manager.[7]

The two interactive television programs will also be syndicated to various countries in the Middle East, Asia, and some parts of Europe. Is this the type of toys, programming, and values we want to share with children around the world?

Leon Eisenberg, M.D., Harvard professor of psychiatry is concerned that these high-tech toys will further habituate children to ideas of modern warfare. "They divorce the sense of the real horror of war from our young people. War is seen as a reasonable way of resolving human conflict. These toys and cartoons sanitize war so that you have no concept of the blood and tragic suffering."[8]

A Fine Distinction

As I did research for this book, I came across many inferences to the correlation between the high sales of war toys and the new patriotism that has increased in popularity since the election of Reagan. For example, "...the gritty image of Sylvester Stallone glowers sweatily from boxes everywhere, as the list of Rambo toys expands like a defense contractor's budget."[9]

As you hear that people believe purchasing war toys,

camouflage sets and interactive toys endorses war play, you wonder how this relationship and the amount of war toys purchased reflects our country's attitudes towards our military forces. But as Dr. Radecki explains, "I'm not against the military. I'm concerned about the promotion of war."[10]

This "fine line" distinction—though a very fine line it is—was evident to me when I viewed some sample *G.I. Joe* television programs. On one particular segment, there was the usual continual rapid fire from the enemy, the use of bazooka, knock out gas, and violent explosions. And what did the mid-break advertisement slot show? A commercial for the U.S. Air Force. The response of one 4-year-old viewer, as he watched the Air Force pilots jump into the planes, was, "There go the G.I. Joes!" The show returned to violent explosions and a promise to continue this frantic battle with the enemy.

According to Ronald Bailey in his book, *Violence and Aggression*, this remoteness of suffering in our modern push-button warfare makes it easier for an individual to carry out the dictates of his group.

For example, recently 37 sailors perished on the U.S.S. Stark. The Iraqi fighter pilot who caused their death was 12 miles away when he fired the Exocets missile which caused their destruction.[11] The ship, according to an expert, appeared to him as a blip on his radar screen, he pulled a trigger which launched his missiles, then veered away—37 men died.

Will the new interactive programming children watch and participate in increase the detachment between violent acts and their consequences?

If we are to face the challenges of the 21st century we need civilized and sensitive human beings. For it is our young children today who will influence decisions on this country's defense programs. They need to be aware that there are real people in the paths of our weapons.

Spreading the Language of Guns

"With knowledge you can evaluate things and recognize them for what they truly are."
Pamela Tuchscherer

Chapter 7

Arming Yourself with Knowledge

Most parents today have grown up as television children and they have been affected by this experience. If they began watching television back in the 50s and 60s, when I did, television was generally thought of as a "pleasant way to spend an evening." Those were the years spent watching *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *Bonanza* and *The Andy Griffith Show*.

With the coming of the 70s the evening prime time was beginning to become more adult orientated with *Mannix*, *The Streets of San Francisco* and *M•A•S•H*. In response, in 1974, the Federal Communications Commission proposed "family viewing hours" in early evening, a plan which was voluntarily adopted by the television industry. However, this move was challenged by writers and producers who said this action would violate the First Amendment and would also infringe on the right of trade. The result was that on November 4, 1976 the California Supreme court found "family viewing time" was a restraint against the First Amendment and abolished it. Fortunately, the networks still in some degree, abide by these informal standards for the family hours of television viewing.[1]

When Does Television Begin to Affect Children?

On Saturday morning, 2-year-old David is playing in the front room with his blocks as his older brother and sister

are watching cartoons. All of a sudden David hears a cackling voice. He turns to the television and there is a black cloaked villain summoning someone to a dark castle. Later David is attracted to a fast paced advertisement which beckons him to visit a fast-food outlet.

The actual viewing time of an average child when "watching" television varies proportionally to age. In one group of studies it was found an average 1-year-old will watch 12 percent of the time that a television set is on. Two-to 3-year-olds will watch 25-45 percent of the time, a 4-year-old will average 55 percent of the time.[2]

When Is the Programming Most Appealing?

Often it is when the tempo speeds up, the camera zooms in, and the audio portion is loudest. With this type of viewing children miss out on dialogue that may give them a complete understanding of the action or describe the positive aspects of the show. The theme or plot of the show is often not obvious at all as the child rotates from blocks, to television, to snack, to window, et cetera. The dominant factor they recall is the physical action and vivid sound effects.

Another factor to consider is that young children lack "world knowledge," which is how stories and narratives are constructed and understood. Often children may not seem to understand the structure, or remember much about a story, probably because they begin with an interpretation of the characters' intentions that is different from an adult's interpretation.[3]

This underscores the active nature of the viewing process as explained in *Television and Behavior*: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties, Vol. 1: Summary Report, which is an update and elaboration of information presented in the 1972 Report of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Television and Behavior:

> Although young children are active and discriminating in their viewing, they still lack the necessary skills for "mature" viewing that develop as they grow older. This fact is not always recognized by those who decide what goes on the television screen or by others who are caretakers of today's television-watching children. To put it in blunt terms, children do not see and hear and understand the same things on a television show that adults see, hear, and understand. (p.23)

As a result, young children often overlook any morals interwoven or summarized at the end of the show, either because of lack of viewing time, or lack of understanding. When this occurs and children miss the characters' motives for moving and confronting one another on the screen, it can have dire consequences on their social development. These findings are particularly applicable to war cartoons. Numerous studies have shown that the more children view violence, the more likely they will use violence to solve a conflict situation.

It has been estimated that the average American child watches approximately 20-30 hours of television a week.[4] This includes older children who are also subject to "action viewing" and are quite adept at channel changing. It was reported that by the time children are in second to third grade they can recall 65 percent of the action they had seen on television. This increase continues until by the time they reach eighth grade they are able to recall 90 percent of the program's action.[5]

The new television interactive programs will increase a child's attention to the physical action, vivid sounds and visual effects. The violent action of the aggressive characters will be the highlight of the program, especially for those holding their interactive weapons.

Increasing Impact of Violent Television

In the 1980s, there have been more pointed concerns over what television does for and to children and many

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parents often think that children may be better off without television.

What has caused this turn in opinion toward television? Is it acts of violence on screen?

In the early years of television, violence in westerns was deemed fit only for the bad guys. The heroes were for upholding the law and order. Over the years both the heroes and the villains have absorbed the violent manners and methods. This preoccupation with violence has developed as a main means of keeping our attention on the story at hand.[6]

In 1982, there were one and a half hours worth of war cartoons airing weekly. In 1986, they totaled 43 hours of air time a week—comprised of 29 different war cartoons. *Inhumanoids*, by Hasbro, which airs on Sundays (in some areas) is the most violent cartoon, averaging 86 acts of violence per hour. War cartoons average 48 acts of violence an hour, with murder or attempted murder happening nearly every minute. War toy ads convey even a higher degree of violence with six acts of violence in a 30-second slot.[7]

The impact of harmful effects of television violence can influence adults as well as children. Heavy viewers, be they children or adults, often have a distorted perception of the world. This can include an exaggerated sense of danger and/or a suspicious and distrustful attitude.[8]

Erma Bombeck summed up her feelings of this problem in an angry letter to the networks. She stated that during a single evening she saw twelve people shot, two tortured, one dumped into a swimming pool, two cars explode, a rape, and a man who crawled two blocks with a knife in his stomach. "Do you know something?" she said. "I didn't feel anger or shock or horror or excitement or repugnance. The truth is I didn't feel. Through repeated assaults of one violent act after another, you have taken from me something I valued—something that contributed to my compassion and caring—the instinct to feel."[9]

Lack of Consequences

This distorted perception of the world and its resulting desensitization of children and adults is of grave concern to many parents and teachers. Surveys have shown that almost 85 percent of all shots fired on television fail to hit their target. Thus 85 percent of the violent acts show little suffering. As a result, the act of firing a weapon at another human being appears to hold little danger or harm.[10]

Think back to the last show you saw that had a violent theme—that shouldn't be too far back considering the violence ratio on television. Did you view a person suffering in pain or slowly dying on the screen? Did you see a killer go through turmoil after committing his crime? Probably not.

It was this view of violence that initiated a fascinating research project by the late Ithiel deSola Pool, a professor of communications at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Professor Sumiko Iwao of Kayo University. Their goal was to compare the content analysis of the violence in television programming. Its basic aim was to determine why Japan has so little crime compared to the U.S., yet their television programming is much more violent?

The study examined the difference between Japanese and U.S. television in terms of the amount and treatment of violence they portrayed. The programs sampled were from a 5-11 p.m. time slot and half were children's programs. The researchers surmised that violence is not a uniform category but can be divided into three types: 1) Random violence which is usually a short burst without much reference to plot, "such as a victim in a cartoon being run over by a car and flattened to a pancake, only to rise a moment later as if nothing had happened." 2) Purposeful violence such as seen on police dramas where a robber overcomes a guard. This violence is portrayed as a means to achieving some end, yet the scenes tend to be unsentimental and the drama moves on. 3) Revelation of suffering violence which is a portrayal of violence which arouses the viewer's compassion toward

the victim, who is usually the good guy.

Pool and Iwao found there was no difference in the amount of violence on television in the two countries, but while random and purposeful violence were found in both, physical suffering in violence is peculiar in Japan. Not only were more "good guys" wounded or killed in Japanese programs, but there was more sign of blood on those who were hurt or killed in a scene.

> The important point is that, even allowing for the fantasy counterpoint in cartoons, the net tone of Japanese programs is more that of a morality story than is the American. Bad assaulters initiate violence against good characters; good assaulters (though less often) initiate violence against bad characters. The most important violence, that experienced by major characters, is something that arouses distress and sympathy, not something to be cheered.

Thus the study found that the violence of action in Japanese programming has a more prevalent function which invariably leads into further dramatization and views of human suffering. In contrast, violence on television in the United States is gratuitous and full of sensationalism. Pool and Iwao concluded that it isn't violence per se that is the problem, it is the context in which violence appears that has the effect.[11]

"It has been estimated that the average American child between the ages of 5 and 15 will witness on television the violent destruction of more than 13,400 fellow human beings. This tentative count does not include the cartoon characters that the child will see battered, smashed, or self-destructed since starting television viewing in infancy."[12]

The influence of television on children's values and its potential for imitating aggressive and antisocial behavior has been supported in studies made around the world in countries where children have access to television and are heavy viewers.[13]

As a practicing psychiatrist, Dr. Radecki sees many young people who are desensititized to violence. "It is

uncommon to see an adolescent or adult with developed anger or aggressive behavior who has not been influenced by the violent abundance of such behavior on television. I see in my own psychiatric practice kids playing war, getting into violence, seeing war as an exciting thing."

In 1987, the NCTV conducted a survey of leading aggression researchers and clinicians around the nation on the likely impact of the new high tech war toys on children. The unanimous opinion of the twelve experts was that the new trend in war toys, because of their description and role playing, will have a harmful effect. They agree that the high tech infrared lazer guns and interactive war toys will have a still more harmful effect on children than the violent toys already studied.[14]

In reference to the new interactive "reactive viewing," Gerald Patterson, Ph.D., a leading researcher on the treatment of hyperaggressive children at the Oregon Social Learning Center in Eugene, Oregon, stated, "These toys and shows normalize violence as a way of resolving issues, whether in the family, with a neighbor, or with another country. It implies that violence is an acceptable and even heroic way of responding. That is dangerous."[15]

"It is a great sorrow in my heart that the United States is the main source of violent entertainment worldwide. Our studies show that roughly 75 percent of all violent entertainment worldwide originates in the U.S.A. America used to be a great source of the spirit of democracy and human freedom. I am afraid that we are now too often teaching a spirit of hatred and war."

Dr. Thomas Radecki

Chapter 8

What's Being Done?

Can individuals or groups make a difference when it comes to controlling the marketing of toy companies and broadcasting? Yes, in some instances.

For example, a public campaign against television violence in the 1970s was initiated by the medical profession. It came as a result of an article written in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (December 1975) by a Seattle pediatrician, Michael B. Rothenberg. He pointed to data from over 50 studies which supported the relationship between television violence and later aggressive behavior and called for "immediate remedial action in terms of television programming." "The time is long past due for a major, organized cry of protest from the medical profession in relation to what, in political terms, I consider a national scandal."

This lead article, accompanied with a cover picture, was sent to over 200,000 doctors, received national publicity, and aroused the interest of Congress. The American Medical

Association (AMA) then initiated a formal effort to persuade networks to reduce violence. After various other endeavors on the part of the AMA, its president wrote letters in 1977 to 10 major corporations asking them to review advertising policies that supported prime time TV shows containing violence. This move was accompanied by workshops on the problems of television violence, research designed to monitor the amounts of violence on television, and encouragement for the National PTA's concurrent efforts. The combined efforts created and supported a climate that made an impression on the broadcasting system.[1]

Edward L. Palmer of Davidson College (N.C.) and Aimee Dorr of U.C.L.A. used the input of many experts in the field of children's television to compile the thorough book, *Children and the Faces of Television: Teaching, Violence, Selling*. In it they conclude:

> The AMA and PTA campaigns accomplished something that all the previous research had failed to accomplish: The level of violence for the 1977 season decreased significantly... It is a commentary on how public policy is implemented that the research evidence by itself had not been persuasive, but that public pressure by two influential organizations did produce change. In fact, at about the same time, the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency made a public plea to its clients not to advertise on programs containing television violence because its own survey had shown that the public might not buy products advertised on such programs. (p.123)

More recently, the efforts of concerned buyers have affected a company's marketing campaign. Sharper Image, a San Francisco co-based chain which sells high-quality merchandise for business executives through 29 retail outlets around the country, recently dropped the toy Uzi gun from their catalog which has a distribution of three million people. Though they had sold hundreds of the cap-firing toy Uzis every month and continue to sell other toy guns, the item was removed from the catalog in September of 1986 after the company received letters opposed to its sale. These letters were from "an intelligent and vocal minority" of

catalog readers, explained Richard Thalheimer, the company's president.[2]

On June 26, 1987, in response to the U.S. Court of Appeals court case, "Action for Children's Television vs. FCC," the court asked the FCC to explain and articulate its elimination of guidelines that it had imposed on commercial time in children's programming in 1984. According to Bill Johnson, head of the FCC Media Department, "The FCC just needs to explain, elaborate or rearticulate the issue." When asked if there was a date set for discussion of this court case, he responded that no date had been set for it to go to committee.

Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television, however, thinks it's going to be impossible for the FCC to justify the abandonment of the guidelines.

Whatever the commission does will not be overlooked by Charren or Representative Edward Markey (D-Mass.), chairman of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee. Markey is a critic of the commission's deregulatory approach and "the overcommercialization" of children's television programming.

Legislation Proposed

Representative Terry Bruce (D-Ill.), with the support of the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV), is proposing legislation which would ban the use of children's programming by toy companies as a means of selling war toys or toys with violent themes. According to Dr. Radecki, this would get rid of 90 percent of all war cartoons and drastically cut war toy sales.

Another proposed legislation supported by the NCTV would require broadcasters to carry a 30 second public service announcement every 4-to-6 hours of the viewing day and during children's program hours, cautioning viewers not to use violence as a means of entertainment. In addition, the group members are trying to get other groups to join with

them to get legislation passed that will accomplish what the FCC refuses to consider.

When speaking with Dr. Radecki, I asked if they could refer to the "Fairness Doctrine" (which basically represented equal time) as was done during the anti-smoking campaign in the early 70s. At that time it was stated that for every three smoking commercials there should be one anti-smoking commercial. His comment was, "The FCC would laugh and the network wouldn't allow it. The days worth of broadcasting would be filled with warnings considering the number of violent programs on the air." (Note: The FCC abolished the "Fairness Doctrine" August 4, 1987.)

However, the coalition reports it has had Ralph Nader's former communications lawyer investigate the constitutionality of its suggested legislation.

> Such legislation is constitutional since advertising does not receive the full protection of the First Amendment. When the advertising is promoting a harmful product, especially if that product is being sold to young children, such advertising may be controlled or prohibited. Indeed, until 1982, the use of children's programming by toy companies to sell toys was prohibited. At that time, Reagan FCC chairman Mark Fowler adopted a philosophy that the broadcast industry should not be restrained by public interest regulation. He announced that as long as he was chairman of the FCC, he hoped to see that there would never be hearings on TV violence.[3]

Also outspoken on children's television matters in the legislature are Senator Frank R. Lautenburg (D-N.J.) who has introduced Bill S 1505, and co-sponsor Senator Timothy E. Wirth (D-Colo.). The Bill would require the FCC to conduct an inquiry into the number of program length commercials and require broadcasters to produce at least seven weekly hours of educational television programming for children. This action would help balance the overbearing toy-linked shows which have virtually shut out alternative programming such as dramatic specials and informational series.

This concept of alternative programming on public airwaves is of vital interest, for at one time the FCC affirmed that broadcasters have a special obligation to serve children as they are a substantial and important community group. Yet today, with the recent influence of Fowler, the FCC seems to be headed in the opposite direction. As Senator Timothy Wirth explains:

> In abrogating [repealing] its responsibility to protect the public and the public interest, the Commission stated that available alternative programming services in media markets may be taken into account when broadcasters are determining the programming needs of children. This means that broadcasters may further minimize their programming aimed at children by simply pointing to the availability of such programming over non-broadcast services, such as cable, or even to what is available through videodisks.[4]

Non-broadcast Programs

The International Coalition Against Violent Entertainment (ICAVE) with board members from the United States, England, Australia, West Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, have found that intensely violent, sexually sadistic, and pro-war video cassette and television entertainment is becoming a serious international problem.

Dr. Radecki, the American representative to the group, notes, "The impact of violent entertainment is so gradual that the average person will never notice his shifts in attitudes and behavior. However, the average child in the U.S., Australia, and Canada will see some 10,000 hours of violent entertainment by the age of 21. There is simply no way that a person can enjoy that much violence and not be harmfully affected at least in some way. This pattern is being repeated in country after country."[5]

Some efforts to deal with this problem have been made in England where some of the most intensely violent videos are totally banned, thanks to the work of the National

Viewers' and Listeners' Association, a member of ICAVE. In Canada, public service announcements warning viewers of the dangers of using violent or sexually degrading material for entertainment is being produced by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. In New Zealand, the Mental Health Foundation has obtained a commitment from the government to begin reducing the high levels of violence present on television.[6]

ICAVE warns that this supply of support is deteriorating and Radecki reminds us that these small steps are not enough. Thus, ICAVE is calling for legislation to ban the use of children's programming by toy companies as a way of selling toys with violent themes and to require broadcasters to carry a 30-second warning every 4 to 5 hours of the viewing day in both Australia and the United States.

Differing Perspectives

Each group who is dealing with this issue has its distinct thoughts on the matter. If you ask Dr. Radecki his thoughts of Peggy Charren's move toward banning the use of public airwaves for commercial purposes, he responds with, "She is into too much advertising." If you ask him about the American Academy of Pediatrics view, he mentions a soft sell of the topic. Refer him to the dealings of the FCC and you may get a response that "asking the FCC to look at something is like throwing it in the garbage can."

Turn the tables around to Peggy Charren and you will see another side of the issue. She thinks Dr. Radecki's NCTV legislation regulation is too "content sensitive." "It is chancy and not the way to go, for it is not for the FCC to define content. Misuse of the system for commercial aspect is enough to say on interactive toys."

When comparing banning violent toy advertising to the smoking ban on TV in 1971, she feels because toys are very different from smoking cigarettes, it is not valid to say the shows are harmful to children's health. "If we put a warning

in writing (which children would not understand or take heed of), it would be to state the programming was commercial and NOT that it is violent."

"We [ACT] are worried less about the shooting at the TV set and worried more about parents and the trouble of the family situation. If shooting at the television is the only thing the child does that is creepy, we shouldn't worry. But if it is the general trend of his activity, then maybe the child is at risk. Society's attitude towards guns is what we need to worry about. 'Bang, bang you're dead,' will continue on the playground. It seems worse that children will be shooting at their friends instead of at TV. Until you get the society to decide if television is harmful to children, you had better be careful. Otherwise censorship will keep MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour from talking about abortion."

Parents' Moral Influence

Look at the views of Robert Coles, a child psychiatrist, Harvard professor, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author: "The nature of growing up is such that children are constantly trying to figure out what is the right way to live, what is the wrong way to live." In the article, "Children Know About Moral Hypocrisy," (*U.S. News & World Report*, Feb. 17, 1986), he points out children learn a lot from other children, from teachers, from churches, reading and watching movies and television. "Parents have a great deal of moral leverage over their children. If parents really want to teach the children certain values, they can resist the magnetic force of the media." He notes that parents can sit down and watch programs with them, pointing out what is destructive or silly. They can exert their influence persuasively by giving good reasons for their choice of programs, rather than simply saying, "This is bad."

In his article, "What Makes Some Kids More Vulnerable to the Worst of TV?" (*TV Guide*, June 21, 1986) Coles describes children who have parents themselves who are

utterly addicted to the tube "with no critical distance." He notes there are children who cling to the television set as the "only reality they know or the best one they can find." He also identifies the latchkey children, whose parents both work. They find the seductive power of television irresistible. Yet, he concludes that what children do with television, psychologically, "depends really on the nature of their own lives, the quality of their family life."

> What matters, finally, is not only the quality of television programming for our young people (or for us, their parents) but the quality of American family life. A stable family, with a vigorous moral life, well and constantly enunciated by parents, will likely provide a persisting immunity to the influence of various shows—whereas a weak and vulnerable family is more likely to fall under the spell of those same programs. (p.62)

This view that parents may provide a persisting immunity to the influence of shows is a positive view, but is it realistic in today's society?

V.B. Cline, professor of psychology at the University of Utah, has found that children are primarily instructed in a system of antisocial values by viewing television violence. He has found a great deal of scientific evidence that suggests children from average home environments exposed to television violence accepted aggression as a normal mode of behavior.[7]

Protecting the Rights of Children

Do our children have the right to be protected from this influential media push on violence (which includes the new interactive toys)?

James M. Wall, Editor-in-Chief of the *Christian CENTURY*, addressed this question in his article, "Rights Clash Between Children and Television" (*The Christian CENTURY*, June 19-26, 1985).

Don't children have a right to be protected from emotionally disturbing and intellectually deadening material coming into their homes? Strong supporters of the First Amendment answer that question by insisting that every television set has an off button. But such a response is as simplistic as is suggesting that we need no regulations against drug peddling, since every child has a right to say, "No." (p.603)

...There is no simple solution....a society's laws and values are often fashioned by the strong for their own benefit. If we are to empower the weak—in this instance, the children—then we must find ways to cut through the First Amendment rhetoric, and to balance freedom-of-speech rights with the right of children to grow up in homes unbombarded by strong sexual and violent images.(p.604)

The clash between children's right to protection and television's right to free expression is enormously complex. It cannot be resolved by the flip responses we have thus far received from the entertainment industry. At the moment, First Amendment rights for the "electronic publishers" are reasonably secure. But the industry profitmakers would be wise to remember the classic judicial limitation on the freedom of speech: one may not cry fire in a crowded theater. What is currently being done to our children on both free and cable television is a kind of crying fire. Such abuses soon may require that a limitation be placed on a very important freedom.(p.604)

"The new TV interactive "shooting" toys are the tip of an iceberg that includes violent children's television and war toys but their intrusive nature may be the one thing that jolts parents into action."
Neal Tyson

Chapter 9

The Limits of Non-involvement

It is seen that this progression from watching war cartoons, to participating in violent interactive programs, to the role-playing of aggression, teaches our children the "language of guns," and desensitizes them to the real dangers of violence.

Couple this with the secretive nature of such advertising tools as *The Child* and the government's labeling *The Television Code* book "non-existent," and you get an overview of a callous attitude toward our children's welfare and needs beyond that related to their buying power.

It would seem that certain toy companies, the Federal Communications Commission, and even the Action for Children's Television have concluded that regulating the content of television—that aspect of the media which professes to have a major influence on our children— is not possible. They say it is up to parents to regulate their children's viewing habits.

I agree it is part of the parents' role to guide their children toward critical viewing of television, videos and movies. Do we, however, turn our backs on society's children who may not have parents with the ability or energy to maintain this vigilance?

We need to look not only at those children who's parents don't monitor their television viewing, but those children who spend endless hours in front of the television in order to avoid the violence found in their backyards. And what of the growing number of latchkey children who use the television as a companion? National attention toward child care has been deemed important enough to be placed on the covers of such magazines as *Fortune*, *Time* and others. The nation, including the government, is aware of the need to improve the care and future of our children and the need to monitor the influence of violence. This is evident in the U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Family Violence's conclusion that evidence is "becoming overwhelming that violent entertainment has harmful effects on both normal children and adult viewers."

The history of government regulation demonstrates that it takes a vocal stand from the masses to make a difference in changing legislation. Research alone, advocacy alone, will not turn the table. Groups such as the National Coalition on Television Violence, the National Telemedia Council, the National PTA, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the "Stop the War Toys Campaign" have goals to protect children and teach our young people nonviolent and prosocial means of behavior. Unfortunately, the actions of these groups will have little effect unless they *and* parents of the children of our nation can bring an influence on the powers of industry.

Small steps such as melting down war toys are looked upon as a means to illustrating aggravation. Teaching critical viewing is a positive step toward helping children control television's influence, yet many children are not receiving these skills. Appealing to the FCC sounds impressive, yet it continually meets with indifference and procrastination.

What will it take to make a difference and cause a change in children's television programming?

It will take people who have a "gut reaction" to this

problem; those that really feel that interactive television toys are the "straw that breaks the camel's back."

How will change take place? It will require a combination of things—teaching children to watch television critically, modeling prosocial values and creative problem-solving, and working together to impress local networks and toy stores that violent programming and toys are not an acceptable part of their community. We must ask the FCC to stop its procrastination and reaffirm its conclusion taken in 1974 that broadcasters have a special obligation to serve and regard children as a substantial and important community group. As these points are taken it will be necessary to alert state and federal legislators that the future of our children lays not just within the hands of industry spokesmen and spokeswomen, but with that of the masses.

Violence has taken proportions that no one expected or even now realizes. For if children are induced—by this pervasive mass medium and from toys available—that violence is condoned, they will look at these heroic deeds as solutions for their own and world problems.

Children have a right to be protected but telling them and their parents to simply turn the television off isn't the answer. As Marc Granetz stated in his article, "Fowler's Video Games" (*The New Republic*, May 2, 1983), we need to look at the freedom of speech and the First Amendment.

> The "freedom" broadcasters crave is mostly the freedom to increase profits. As for freedom of speech, the point of the phrase is not that certain voices should be amplified and other voices silenced; it is that anyone who wants to speak should be heard, that free speech protects the quality of public discourse. In other words, "free speech" protects not only speakers but listeners. And listeners require many voices, not just a few very loud ones. But the marketplace couldn't care less about the need for diversity. In print, on our airwaves, and across all of our miles of wire and cable, the health of our country depends upon a multiplicity of voices.[1]

So let us raise our voices as parents and teachers of our children, as members of our community, and as citizens of our country. Let us hope the meeting of the 100th Congress will confront this issue and decide in favor "of the children." For until the industry profit makers hear us loud and clear, change will not come.

Part II

An Introductory Note:

Children are exposed to many perspectives through peers, television, and other forms of media. Some of these are positive. Unfortunately, there are a growing number of negative attitudes portrayed including stereotyping of individuals, acceptance of gross and violent products, and desensitization toward violence.

The new interactive toys and programs exemplify the pressures on children toward negative role-playing and aggression. The following chapters will provide you with methods to help children become critical television viewers, find positive alternative activities, and become sensitive to others. It will also help children recognize that conflict situations can be solved through cooperation and creative problem-solving rather than through violence.

"To be selective, to say 'No' to inappropriate television, is to face a powerful persuader and prevail. For children especially, this is a vital lesson."
Todd Evans

Chapter 10
Critical Viewing

Television teaches values and ideas both when we are aware of it and when we are not. *Mr. Rogers* or *Nova* are educational. However, so are *Tour of Duty* and *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future*, but they teach very different lessons. Knowing the effects viewing violence has on children, it becomes vitally important to help them assert control over television—to become critical viewers.

How to Begin

According to Ibrahim M. Hefzallah, author of *Critical Viewing of Television*, "A critical viewer is a person who knows how to observe, and how to evaluate what is observed." This includes understanding the medium of television and thinking about one's relationship with television. Contrary to the belief that if you evaluate what you are viewing it will spoil the effect of just relaxing and being entertained, it has been found that critical viewers can be more selective and avoid being frustrated by mediocre or poor quality programs. It makes television viewing more interesting and critical viewers appreciate quality programs more than the average viewer.

"To help our children to use television in an intelligent manner, we ourselves have to use it in an intelligent manner. Before we can foster tastes in our children, we have to develop taste ourselves and wholly believe in its necessity," explains Hefzallah.[1]

Taking Stock

As you begin to take a critical look at your television viewing schedule, keep track of what shows you watch and the times that you view them. Also note why you view them—for entertainment, relaxation, gaining information or because there is nothing else to do.[2] Hefzallah asks you to look at your personal relationship with the TV by asking yourself such questions as: "Do you automatically turn on the TV set when you get up or when you come back from work? How often do you take meals in front of the TV set? Are you a channel wanderer? Do you plan leisure time around your favorite programs?"[3]

Bring your children into this activity by asking them similar questions? How many hours of TV do you think you watch a week? Do you automatically turn the TV on when you come home from school? Do you watch anything that is on TV? In the useful book,*Children and the Media* (Instructor, 1986), author Don Kaplan introduces children to the description of TV addicts. He defines an addict as "someone who has an irresistible impulse or habit to do something," and explains that some social scientists believe people can become addicted to watching television. Kaplan has designed the following exercise for children to deal with the question "How Addicted are You?"

18 Questions

Before you read the rest of this page (no peeking!), write what effect you think TV has on you (if any):

_____

_____

_____

Now answer the following questions to find out how TV affects you:

1. **During the last few days, have you talked to anyone about a TV program or star?** Yes ___ No ___
2. **Do you read any TV magazines?** Yes ___ No ___
3. **Have you ever spoken any phrases you heard on TV when you were talking with friends?** Yes ___ No ___

4. **Have you ever carried or worn anything that had a TV character on it?** Yes ___ No ___
5. **Have you ever dressed like a TV character, or worn your hair in a style you saw on TV?** Yes ___ No ___
6. **Do you play any games that are based on TV game shows or characters?** Yes ___ No ___
7. **Have you ever bought, or asked your parents to buy, something you've seen advertised on TV?** Yes ___ No ___
8. **Do you ever get upset because you can't buy things you see on TV?** Yes ___ No ___
9. **Do you think you should talk and act the way children do on TV?** Yes ___ No ___
10. **Do you think if you see and hear it on TV, it must be true?** Yes ___ No ___
11. **Do you think people behave in real life the way they do on TV?** Yes ___ No ___
12. **Do you ever wish you were just like someone on TV?** Yes ___ No ___
13. **Do you ever get upset because you don't look like, or are not as popular as, TV characters?** Yes ___ No ___
14. **Do you ever get upset because you can't solve problems as quickly as people on TV can?** Yes ___ No ___
15. **Have you ever gotten excited, upset, or scared while watching TV?** Yes ___ No ___
16. **Has seeing or hearing something on TV ever changed the way you thought about something?** Yes ___ No ___
17. **Have you ever seen or heard something on TV you hadn't known about before?** Yes ___ No ___
18. **Do you find it easier to watch TV than talk with your family?** Yes ___ No ___

Now that you are finished, go back and re-read your answers to the above questions. Did some of your answers surprise you? Think for a moment, and then write another short paragraph about how TV affects you. This time, include some ideas as they relate to your answers of the above questions. How is this paragraph different from (or the same as) the one that you wrote at the beginning of "18 Questions?"

_____

_____

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The next step is to keep track of the programs you and your children watch and rate the programs. Analyze them. Consider if you felt the program was worth watching. Was it as funny as you thought it would be? Did it supply the information you hoped it would? Did it make you feel better? Joan Wilkins, author of *Breaking the TV Habit* suggests looking at the violence in the script. Was it necessary? Did it scare you? Was it appropriate for the family to view?

According to the National Telemedia Council, the more you observe and think about the structure and production of a television program, the more you will be able to bring that knowledge to your appreciation and evaluation of the programs you see. When you evaluate a program consider the following program elements:[4]

Story Was it real? Was it fantasy? Could it have happened?

Characters Were they real people or stereotypes? Were the actor and actresses believable?

Music and Sound Did it add to your enjoyment?

Entertainment Value Was the program sparkling and original or trite and ordinary? Did you enjoy it?

Emotional Effect Were you a part of the story? Were you stirred by an emotion...sadness, joy, anger?

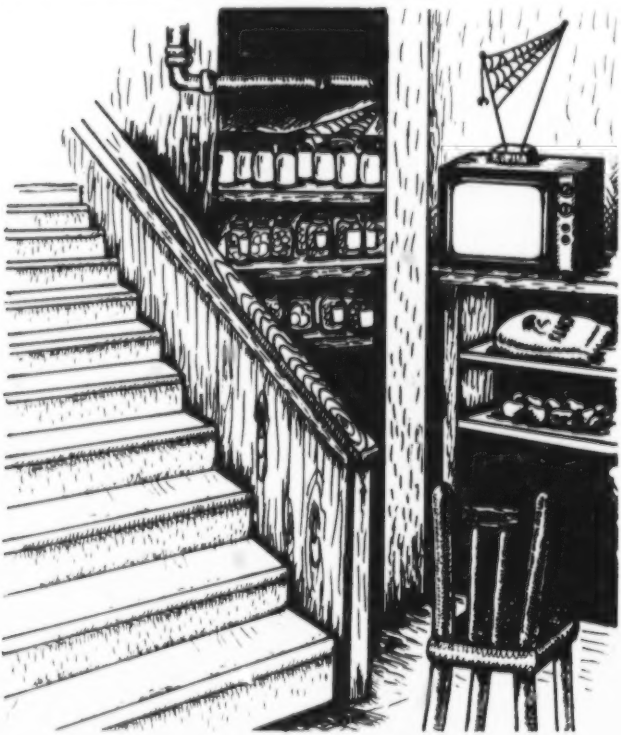
Message Was there a message? How did it relate to you?

The After Thoughts Did you learn something new and different...about the world, its problems, people's behavior? Did you receive helpful ideas? Could it have hurt you?

Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television notes that by including your children in family viewing and making it a participatory experience you can express your feelings about what offends you as well as why you like a particular program. In retrospect, your children can share their thoughts with you as well.[5]

Cutting Back

Reducing family viewing might take time but it will open lines to family communication. There have been various methods tried over the years. Some cut out TV cold turkey, others eliminate it during school nights, others choose to make it unavailable only a few nights a week to start. Many families have found limiting the number of televisions to one in the house makes a decisive impact. Remove the extra one from the kitchen, the bedroom or the playroom. One research group found people gravitate less to the television when it's not in a main room, so keep your single set in the most uninviting room of the house.[6]



One TV in the most undesirable location

Once a decision has been made on how many hours of TV viewing are acceptable, try to decide together as a family which nights to cut back the hours. Be consistent and do not make exceptions—don't allow the TV to be turned on at random. Decide on Sunday night, by looking at the TV schedule, what programs will be watched and write them down. Don't forget programs on your PBS station which often has shows of outstanding quality without commercial interruption. Later, on your record form, note if this schedule viewing was attended to, who watched the program, and who enjoyed it. For those families who have set shows they plan to watch weekly, it is recommended that they don't buy or read TV-related magazines so that they are not tempted by specials. (I find this difficult at times, for my family and I would be greatly disappointed if we missed *The Grinch Stole Christmas*, or the special on Maurice Sendack.)

A source of short reviews for the best children's programming on commercial and public broadcasting as well as cable is "Notable Programs," a release provided to members of the National Telemedia Council. The Council also provides a newsletter, *Telemedium* which includes trends in the media, suggested reading, and articles of special interest.

If specials are to be added to your viewing time, it is best to adjust your schedule to fit them in. According to Wilkins in *Breaking the TV Habit*, if you are considering viewing a special that runs over a period of days, such as the Olympics, watch the opening and closing ceremonies if they are of interest and summaries of the daily events. "In addition, choose specific events to watch, just as if you were buying tickets for them. Take in events like track and field that your children can go out and try on their own, or tune into an unusual sport to introduce the family to it."

For parents and teachers interested in reading more on how to interpret, evaluate, and limit television time, and how to become involved in the process of making their

feelings known to producers and broadcasters, there is a very readable and useful booklet available titled *Children and Television...a primer for parents* by John P. Murray and Barbara Lonnborg. The 12-page booklet is filled with facts, research studies, resources and ideas on children and television.

Another excellent resource for families is Action for Children's Television's *The TV-Smart Book for Kids* (E.P. Dutton, 1986). In the form of a calendar, it helps solve a lot of TV problems that arise in a household and includes activities children will enjoy. Each month there is a topic to be discussed, such as TV plans, alternatives to TV, violence, stereotyping, views on minorities, advertising, reality and fantasy, and after-school time. There are also follow-up activities to programs watched and problems to be solved each month under the heading *TV Trouble Spots* which require family discussion. For example, "You watch a program you really want to see—something different for a change. But everyone else at school watches the usual stuff, so you feel left out when they talk about it." In addition, there is a valuable parents' guide attached in the back of the calendar book.

Do you have something planned for those hours that were left open after cutting back on television? Help your children learn how to fill their time so that they can gain experience in entertaining themselves. Note which activities were enjoyed and how they could have been improved. By talking with your children about their frustration and anger over not being able to watch television you can learn more about their feelings and better understand them. According to Wilkins, in *Breaking the TV Habit*, "Working out these feelings together is a real connection between generations. Helping your children deal with their frustrations actively rather than passively, helping them face and work out their problems rather than hiding them away in front of the TV, will really put them solidly on the path to growing up and learning how to deal with the world."

Children's View of Reality

Another aspect of critical viewing is helping children distinguish between reality and fantasy. Much of this discussion will be dependent on the child's age. If you are dealing with children under the age of 5 or 6, you have to remember that they deal with perceptions rather than facts. While watching a program with a child you can remind him that a particular character is just pretending to be that particular character or that what they are watching is simply a story. However, as was mentioned in Part I of the book dealing with imagery, parents' comments may not be completely understood and even if they are, the images the child has seen are already stored in the child's mind.

The break between reality and fantasy is often blurred. In addition, the rapid movement of actions on television leave a young child little time or opportunity to process what he has just seen. A child has no control over television except the opportunity to turn it off—if he is shown how and given the means and permission to do it. There are a few programs which make the distinction between fantasy and reality, one of them being *Mr. Rogers'*. Here the child viewers are taken into a make-believe kingdom by means of the "trolley."

Do producers of children's programming take on the responsibility to learn the effects of their shows on children?

Do they have writers versed in child development who are aware of young children's understanding of what is presented on television or do they use consultants? Not always. I contacted Mattel and World Events and asked their public relations directors if a psychologist or child psychiatrist had been consulted when creating their new interactive programs. Mattel referred me to the Landmark Entertainment Group where Gerry Goddard and others in the department developed the Captain Power story line. One of the writer's was a clinical psychologist. However, no specific child psychologist was called in.

The World Events public relations director thought there may have been input from psychologists, but she was unsure. If no one is sure, you wonder if this responsibility is being taken seriously.

Another question surfaces when producers are creating a program which is appealing and appropriate for both young children and adults. As Candance Irving of Mattel explains, *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* is targeted for family viewing. Does this mean they are developing their material for children (to be tolerated by parents) or developed for the enjoyment of older children and adults (and young children are taken for granted)?

Depending on its audience, there is a difference in how a show will be presented. I spoke with Dr. Richard Suinn, head of the Department of Psychology at Colorado State University, and he had some recommendations for the presentation of interactive television shows which would help young children better understand them.

"It's important children are told and understand that this plot or story is 'pretend,' just as when children are in theater drama or reading a fairy tale. Even better would be to explain it is a 'game.' Children need to be taught to discriminate between reality and non-reality. One way to do this is to make sure there is a clear start and ending."

It would be beneficial for young children participating in the interactive portion of the show, to be given this preliminary notification that the show is a game. It would even be better, Suinn noted, if at the beginning of the program a notice was given that, for example, "The following is a fantasy and game." And at the conclusion that there is an announcement that explains the game is over, and thus bring an end to the non-reality setting.

"It would be advantageous to allow the child the ability to control this type of program and terminate it if he desires, such as being able to push a button on his weapon to stop the show," Suinn said. "This, in a learning sense, would give the child control and he would know if he gets frightened during

a portion of the program that he can end it. This would reinforce the fantasy portion and he would realize that if he had a frightening dream about the plot, he could do something about it, like push a button."

Another type of associated control would be having the announcer on the program tell the viewers the program is coming to an end. For example, the announcer could tell the child, "Touch the screen and soon the show will be over. The program could then have a five second delay and then come in with a commercial. This would be different than if there was direct control in a type of programming such as on a video where if you hit a button on your weapon it would stop the action."

Another future option might use computer programming so that a child watching the program could hit a button which would lead the story plot toward different solutions. "This type of direct action on the part of the child would confirm the fact that he has control and that he is involved with a program that is not real," Suinn confirmed. "In the long range it would make television interactive programming a somewhat more healthy situation and involve some creativity, instead of being a potential threat."

The Character's Role

For older children another aspect of critical viewing is observing and understanding the characters. To help clarify what roles characters are portraying and the types of programs that are seen on television, Kaplan has created the activity, "Putting Them On," in *Children and Media*.

Putting Them On

There are many different types of TV programs. Write the titles of two programs you have seen or know about for each type of program listed below. (Use a dictionary to look up words you don't know.) ●

1. News _____

2. News magazine _____

3. Documentary _____

4. Docudrama* _____

5. Drama _____

6. Adventure _____

7. Soap opera _____

8. Cartoon _____

9. Situation comedy _____

10. Educational _____

11. Talk _____

12. Game _____

13. Sports _____

14. Variety _____

List the types of programs on which you find people being themselves. _____

On which types of programs do you find actors portraying real people who lived in the past or who are living now? _____

On which types of programs do you find actors portraying fictional characters?

_____

On which types of programs do you find entertainers such as dancers, singers, or magicians? _____

_____

*A docudrama is a program that is based on real people or a real incident, but mixes fact with fiction.

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Drs. Jerome and Dorothy Singer of the Yale University Family Television Research Center have done numerous studies on children and television. In their book, *Teaching Television*, (Dial, 1981) they note parents often ask if children should watch "soaps" on television. Their response was to impress the fact that the material presented is not always appropriate for young children and may be confusing or frightening. If parents do allow their children to watch they should remind them that it is just a story and "may be an exaggeration of problems that people face."

> Some programs that elementary school-aged children watch contain violent acts, fairly explicit sex, and sometimes even rape. Parents have asked if they should laugh off these incidents, divert the children's attention from the screen by chatter or by offering food or snacks, or quickly jump up and turn off the set. We feel that parents should try to explain that sometimes *some* people behave in this fashion. Use explanations that your children can grasp in terms of their age and ability to understand. It is difficult to always shield a child from exposure to some antisocial act that he may see on TV. Let the child know you are available to *talk* about it. It is always better to deal with the facts maturely than to deny the existence of aggression and sex.(p.41)

Programs made to entertain children (and adults) often teach children untruths or stereotyped professions. Take for example scientists, who are often shown in cartoons as villains trying to control or destroy the world. As Peggy Charren notes in *Changing Channels*, "While this idea of what a scientist is like may not actually determine your child's relationship to science, it is worth discussing the good and exciting discoveries that can happen through science.[7]

Another example is the stereotyping of police officers. On many shows, officers drive fast and often fight criminals with their fists or guns. Heavy viewers of such programs often stereotype police as a person holding a gun or chasing after someone. Children need to become aware that many officers work for years without using their guns except during target practice. They should be reminded that police officers direct traffic, work in offices and work with the community members to ensure a safe environment. The Singers point out that the reason police are portrayed as exciting aggressive characters is to keep the audience attracted. If the audience is attracted and watches the program, the station will make money through advertising.[8]

While being aware of stereotyping, note whether women, handicapped people, elderly people, and characters of a distinct ethnic heritage are likeable and respected on the programs you watch. If they are not, bring it to your children's attention. This should include the negative values

brought forth with the up-coming *Garbage Pail Kids* program.

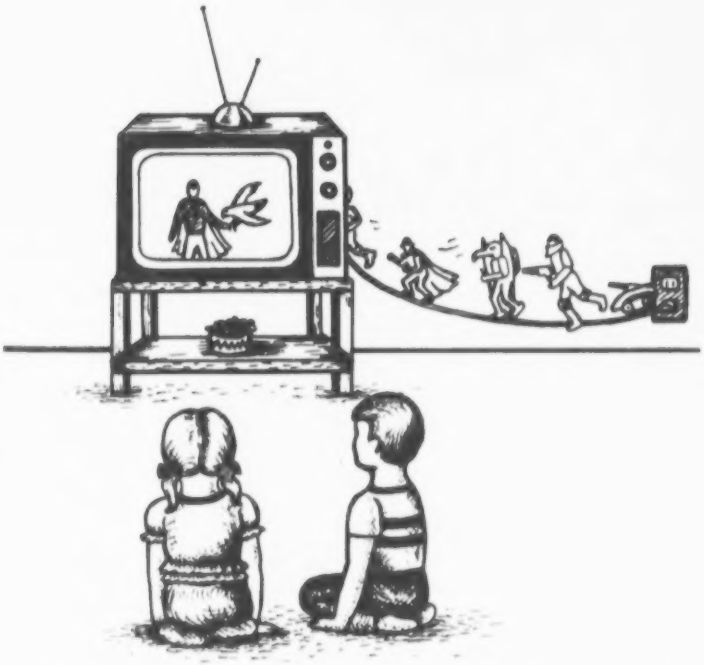
Over the years, children who are non-white or non-Anglo have had few role models and children who are white and English-speaking have not given it much thought. According to Charren and Sandler in *Changing Channels*, both you as parents and your children should be aware of this problem because all children need role models and white children in segregated areas need contact with minorities in their everyday lives.[9] Possible solutions are as follows: 1) Look for TV programs that have positive minority role models such as PBS specials, 2) Read books that contain positive roles such as *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, *Thank You Jackie Robinson* by Barbara Cohen and *Roll of Thunder, hear my cry* by Mildred Taylor. Be aware of what your children are watching and discuss your feelings with them. "Don't let TV's racism undermine what you are trying to teach your family," summarizes Charren.[10]

Dispelling the Myths

Helping children understand how television works gives them insight into the creation of programs. For younger children, it takes away some of the magic of how programs are televised—"Is that real?" Realizing that the enlargement of a character is created by a camera moving up close rather than the character growing, that the use of lighting and music can create illusions, and special effects such as editing can make people disappear, can help a child to understand some of what is going on.

Books, such as *A New True Book: Television* by Karen Jacobsen (Children's Press, 1982) or *Series TV: How a Show is Made* by Malka Drucker and Elizabeth James (Houghton Mifflin, 1983) can help kindergarteners and those in elementary school grasp what is involved from recording a program on a camera to relaying it into the living room.

Older children can begin to understand the actual physics of this medium such as the electronic beams and



Often young children are confused by the magical effect of television. Some believe cartoon characters come into the TV through the plug on the wall.

frames of a picture and other special effects. An excellent resource for both interested parents and teachers is *Children and Media*. In reproducible workbook form it teaches children how to become aware of how TV signals are sent and received, who controls the television and how ratings work—helping them gain a better understand of how television is controlled. In addition, it helps children understand the ways the media affects them. "Because media is so pervasive, children are often overwhelmed by it and rarely stop to think about how the media shapes their lives," Kaplan explains.

Making Criticisms Heard

Children can learn that there are various ways to make their voices heard. In *Children and Media*, Kaplan suggests such activities as writing station managers and telling specifically what you like or dislike about a show, not buying products advertised on programs you think are silly, insulting or too violent, and writing sponsors to tell them so. Writing reviews of programs and sharing them with friends or community members is another suggested activity. An organized poll takes place each fall, in which expressed opinions are compiled into a printed report and is sent to the FCC, broadcasters, sponsors, and congressional committees. Those interested in taking part should contact the National Telemedia Council and ask for information on the *Look-Listen Opinion Poll*. (See Appendices)

Coping with Commercials

Children are an easy target for manufacturers. They are easily influenced by the persuasive element, materialistic and social values relayed by commercials. For example, many children "just know" they will have more friends if they have the new toy advertised on a lunch box, video or television. Since the deregulation of television, character licensing has expanded and television shows are a prime marketing tool. There are now more than 40 television shows linked to toys.[11] This persuasive element is also compounded by peer-pressure to obtain the toys advertised.

Celebrity endorsement also encourages children to consider a product. Though this type of advertising is not allowed in children's programming time slots, it has been found that celebrities can increase children's preferences for the advertised product up to 67 percent.[12]

Are They Telling the Truth?

In the book, *The Best Thing on TV*, author Jonathan Price describes a study done by Thomas Bever in which most of the young children studied appeared to regard all television content as entertainment. "They often confused programs with commercials and were unable to tell the difference between fantasy and reality in either."[13]

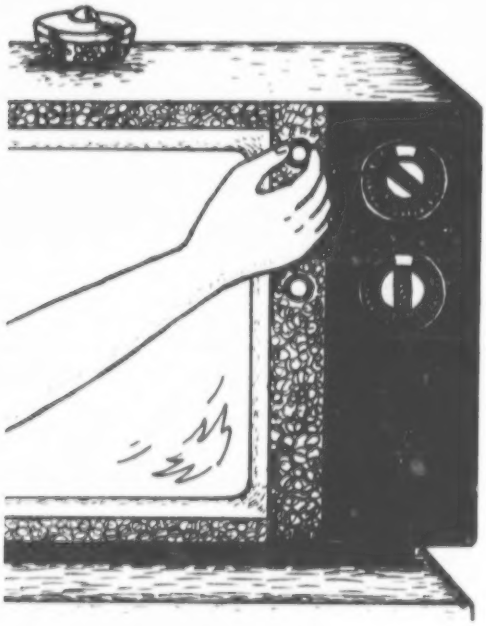
According to the study, children between the ages of seven and ten, may be the most vulnerable to the "manipulation of TV advertisers." Though most of this group could distinguish between reality and fantasy, and between make-believe and lying, they did waver between belief and disbelief—because some had gotten the advertised product and been disappointed. These children felt some anger at commercials, and they often suspected that something deceptive might be going on, though they were not sure exactly what. It was ascertained that by the age of ten, many had solved the problem by deciding commercials always lied.

By the age of 11 or 12, most children could understand the purpose of commercials, yet they were more willing to tolerate lying by adults and television in general. In conclusion, Bevers and his co-workers warn, "The 10-year-old's anger toward misleading advertising as well as the 11- and 12-year-old's increased tolerance of social hypocrisy raise serious questions about the role of TV advertising in the socialization of children....They may be too young to cope with such thoughts without permanently distorting their views of morality, society, and business."[14]

Product Lust

Does the amount of television viewing have an affect on a child's desire for products advertised?

"Yes," according to Charles Atkins, Ph.D., professor of telecommunications at Michigan State University. In a study



How to have a NAG-FREE November

of preschool and elementary school children he discovered that those who watched large amounts of television asked for advertised products twice as often as light viewers and argued much more with their parents over food and toy purchases than light viewers did. "As a result, they got a lot of rejection from their parents which, in turn, led to greater conflict within the family."[15]

Bruce Gagon of Orlando, Florida, has found that by watching Saturday morning cartoons with his son, he can see how the kids are inundated by commercialism. The advertisements teach the kids how to work on the parents, because this method sells. He claims children's craving for war toys stems from the "nagging factor" built into television commercials.[16]

Commercials and advertising have many effects on children. This was evident in a project designed to give students at Wheeler School in Providence, Rhode Island, a new perspective on television. Peter Hufstader, the past chairman of the English department, challenged the families to not watch TV for the month of November. The result was that the children and families missed television, but felt they benefited from the experience. However, an unanticipated result of the TV turnoff was that some parents noted that their *children never mentioned Christmas during the entire month of November!*[17]

Commercials are for Selling

Dorothy and Jerome Singer, who have been involved in studying the influence of television on children for many years, have found that it is only when children understand the purposes of advertising and the techniques that are used to enhance the products that they can critically evaluate what the commercials actually say, what they leave out, and what they subtly imply.[18]

Talking Back

There are various ways to heighten awareness of commercial content. One way is to talk back to the commercial. Writer and educator Neil Postman, describing his response to commercials in an interview with Sandra L. Robinson ("Childhood: Can It Be Preserved?" *Childhood Education*, May/June 1985) found, "...being a parent in a situation such as we're all in now requires almost an act of rebellion or insurrection against the whole culture. It's very hard constantly having to say to the children, 'Well, you know what you just heard is not true,' or 'The things they're telling you to buy are probably just junk...'" This activity needs to be done with some tact, he points out.

> For example, I'm a great believer in talking back to the television so that when commercials are on and suddenly

someone is saying, "Do you want your shirts to be cleaner?" I will say back, "Wait a second! Who are you?" The kids, up to a point, enjoyed that, got the point and joined in every once in a while. But I must confess there were times when all this seemed very annoying to them and they would say, "Will you cut that out? I'm trying to watch this show."

So it does have to be done with discretion. After all, you have to realize this is your child's culture. This is it for them. It's always a little risky, even if you're a mother or father, to be poking fun, critiquing, ridiculing, calling into question all of these things.(p.338)

When our family views commercials, we turn the sound off and take turns making up a silly dialogue. The children enjoy taking turns and deciding what comments to make.

Explaining Persuasion

When discussing commercials with your children be sure children are aware that the commercial message is created to convince them to buy something. In his book *Children and Media*, Don Kaplan suggests making sure children know what "persuasive" or "persuasion" means. He has developed various lessons which help children recognize techniques of persuasion such as name calling when talking about the competition, flattery, and snob appeal. He also suggests looking at the claims advertisers make and the ways advertisers may mislead the viewer.

Discuss why there are commercials, the relationship between profits and television programming, and how toys advertised on television are expensive because the cost of advertising is passed on to the consumer in the price of the toy. To impress on the child the cost of a toy, Peggy Charren of ACT suggests adding up how many weeks it would take to buy a particular toy from a child's weekly allowance.[19]

The Singers point out several modes of evaluation when critically viewing commercials. One is to be aware of the messages being directly and indirectly presented. Another is the means used to present the message and if they include technical techniques such as slow motion filming or distortions, such as incorporating more toys in the commercial

than what are actually being offered. They ask you to note whether the commercial contains spoken or written disclaimers that children are unaware of.

When discussing commercials and advertising in other forms of the media, parents and teachers should stress that it is up to the individual to decide if he needs or wants the product advertised, and not to be overly influenced by the media hype.

Focusing on the Positive

According to Charren and Sandler in their book *Changing Channels*, "In terms of the way we learn, it's always a good idea to accentuate the positive." One way to do this is to look at the public service announcements (PSAs). These short messages are a special service intended to tell the viewers something important such as taking precautions with electricity or telling of an event happening in the community. They suggest by having children make a list of the PSAs aired on the television, they may begin to look more closely at what these messages are saying and compare them to commercial presentations. Children can also create their own public service announcements and act them out.[20]

Others Concerned

Children's television advertising is of concern around the world. An example of this was expressed in an article, "Soft Toys get the Hard Sell," by Ruth Nichol in the *KTA News*, (The Journal of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Association, April/May 1987).[21] The article pointed out that a big increase in television advertising is one of the main reasons for the huge growth in the toy industry over the last few years. These advertisements include products such as Transformers, My Little Pony, Glo-Friends, and Master of the Universe.

With the lifting of import controls on most toys, New Zealand children can get top-selling overseas items at the

same time—or very soon after—they are released elsewhere. It has also been found that the current toy marketing ploy doesn't stop at one toy but gears toward character collectibles. Note, however, that though they carry advertising, Television New Zealand has refused to buy shows based on toys such as Transformers or Master of the Universe, saying they are too violent.

One New Zealand mother commented that at their house they watch television with their children and make critical comments about programs and advertisements. "My children have critical comments, but I feel very concerned for the enormous number of kids who don't and absorb it all...Those children are totally open to abuse." At the moment she is unsure whether, in the absence of parental guidance, society should take collective responsibility to protect such children. "But I think society needs to decide that. Certainly it is building a lot of problems into society. Advertising to children is causing a lot of grief."

Violence—Turn it Off!

Problems arise when children become absorbed in watching programs that are designed for adults and contain more realistic fighting and violence than children's programming.

News for Visual Appeal

An area that has caused concern in our family and others is young children viewing nightly news programs. We do not have the news on when the children are around and for a very good reason. Producers of news programs look for footage which has strong visual appeal to attract viewers and keep them tuned in—unfortunately this often takes the form of violence. If you watch the average nightly news, you may see and/or hear of deaths, rioting, soldiers in action in Central America, etc. We have been told by friends and relatives that we shelter our children too much to the reality

of the world. Yet, I am a strong believer in Neil Postman's belief that young children today are losing their childhood as a result of the continual exposure to adult programming and adult values.

Two interesting statistics dealing with news coverage are shared in Ibrahim Hefzallah's book, *Critical Viewing of Television*. "Today close to two-thirds of the population rely mainly on television for news [22] and television is considered through surveys to be the most believed medium.[23] Also because of production and broadcast deadlines, the depth of the story is undermined and coverage tends to be more of a headline. It has been found if someone took all the words that were spoken on a half-hour network broadcast and printed them in a newspaper format, they would not fill one page of *The New York Times*.[24] Knowing this may give families serious about learning of world events the initiative to look for an alternate source of news, such as the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* or other forms of media. If children are allowed to watch news intended for adults, be sure you or another adult is available to explain reports that are confusing or frightening.

Aggression Linked to Viewing

Does violent television viewing really affect young children when they are balanced out by school activities or home environment?

Convincing evidence came from a long-range study of 875 children in a rural district of New York State. Psychologists Leonard Eron and M. Lefkowtiz asked 8-year-old children questions designed to assess aggression. The children's teachers and parents were asked similar questions.[25]

Data was also compiled on family environments, reading and television-watching habits. Ten years later, when 460 of the original group were asked followed up questions, Eron found that the relationship between viewing television

violence in the third grade and aggression 10 years later was significant only among the boys. This aggression rating—"a measure of the child's aggressiveness as reported by his classmates"—depended more on the amount and kinds of violence the boys had seen on television than on any other factor, such as school achievement or economic status.[26]

In a follow-up report to the 10-year study, Eron and Husemann conducted a 3-year long-term study with first and third grade children. This study found a significant relationship between the viewing of television violence and aggressive behavior in girls as well. But it was noted that the correlation between the two variables decreased with age for the girls and increased for the boys.[27] It was again found that other factors such as parental viewing and aggressive predispositions did not account for the relation between viewing and aggression.[28]

Children's potential for imitating aggressive and anti-social behavior shown on television has been documented in studies made around the world. An interesting study took place in Canada where researchers did a natural long-term study of three communities that were previously without television service. In their report, *The Impact of Television* (Academic Press, 1986), researchers found there was a significant increase in the children's physical and verbal aggressive behavior following the inception of television in their community.

> This increase occurred for both physical and verbal aggressive behavior; it occurred for both boys and girls; it occurred at more than one age level; it occurred for children who were initially low in aggressive behavior as well as those who were initially high in aggressive behavior; and it occurred for the same children studied longitudinally and same-aged children compared cross-sectionally. The evidence from this natural experiment suggests, therefore, that television led to an increase in Notel [city's name] children's aggressive behavior.(p.334)

According to William Kreidler, author of *Creative Conflict Resolution*, "Aggression usually occurs as a result of

an excited emotional state. Anger and frustration are the emotions that frequently lead to aggression...Once a child is excited, some incident or action is perceived as threatening to the child's resources, needs, or values. This triggers aggressive behavior in response to the perceived threat."

This triggering effect was seen in a study of preschool children who were assigned to view violent cartoons, neutral films and prosocial television. It was found the children who watched violent television declined in self-control which included tolerance for minor delays, spontaneous obedience of school rules, and task persistence.[29]

In the Canadian study, researchers found children learn not only specific types of aggressive behavior from television but they learn through observation that aggression is a successful and accepted method of achieving goals. This message was not only learned by the child but also by his friends and family.[30]

Other researchers have found that children who viewed fantasy-violent programs were less cooperative, less successful in their relationships, and less imaginative, regardless of the children's IQ scores. They also noted that some children have indicated that they would get into family arguments by imitating aggressive actions or attitudes they had seen on TV.[31]

Overplayed Violence

Television researchers Dorothy and Jerome Singer suggest parents can help children understand violence by pointing out some of the characteristics of action shows. Actors miss completely when they swing at each other, "and that camera angles and sound effects convey the impression of punches." Children should also notice that when characters are shot, fall down, and simply disappear from the plot and the screen, television isn't showing the consequences of fighting or shooting. It's important for children to be aware that aggression doesn't solve a problem so easily. "Indeed, it

is just the beginning of a problem, because if a person is hurt, he or she must spend days, weeks, or months recuperating. The aggressor also may hurt himself in hitting someone else. Also, if he shoots a person, he may feel terrible afterward, and almost certainly would be arrested and stand trial, even if the shooting was in self-defense."[32]

If you have a child who is unaware of the violence in programs he watches or questions the amount, sit down and watch a program with him. Observe how many times a gun is fired. Ask questions such as, "Did you see anyone get hurt or killed? Did you see them in pain or recovering from an injury?" Also, help children recognize verbal aggression and deceit in the program.

Through critical viewing children can learn that violence is overplayed on television and often seems non-threatening or exciting because the consequences are not usually shown. Discussing alternative problem solving methods that are more acceptable than violent confrontations can be effective in expanding awareness. (See Chapter 13 "Solving Problems without Shooting")

An Appetite for Video Violence

The use of television video machines for viewing brutal and sadistic movies is also a concern for parents and educators in the United States and around the world. In a recently completed study by the South Australian Council for Children's Films and Television it was found that of 1498 10- to 11-year-old school children from 34 schools in South Australia, 60.9 percent reported that they have a video cassette recorder at home and 85.7 percent also reported watching videos at friends' homes. Of the videos mentioned 50 percent were rated as unsuitable for children under 15- to 18-years of age.

Intensely violent videos were found to be very popular with children (and their parents, older siblings or friends who had rented them). Forty-one percent of the children

had seen *First Blood* and 29 percent had seen *Friday the 13th*. In the study the children were asked to describe scenes that were "so enjoyable that you always seem to remember them." It was recorded that 33 percent of the children most enjoyed the violence and horror scenes, while 1.5 percent described sexual themes.

The reports were shocking. One child wrote, "I liked when she went for a swim and lost her legs." (*Jaws 2*) Another wrote, "I liked when the bikers dragged a man by the feet on their motorbikes." (*Mad Max*). Yet another said, "I like the part where Stallone set a trap which is set on a spring. When the police officer got to a certain place the spring releases and a bar of wooden spikes flies into the officer's legs." (*First Blood*).

Of the children in the study, 37 percent reported having unwanted memories of violence and horror from which they cannot free themselves. Parents of the children in the study were also questioned. It was found 168 parents noticed their children being frightened by various intensely violent films, but only one reported his child becoming more aggressive.[33]

The study concluded that many children and adults are becoming seriously affected by their viewing this material and are developing an appetite for violence. Furthermore, parents are unaware of the influence of violent and sexually degrading material on themselves and their children.

Dr. Radecki, chairman of the National Coalition on Television Violence, who was invited to Australia to testify before the Australian Senate Select Committee on Video and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal noted, "The current epidemic of violence in Australia in its adolescent and young adult populations is the same trend that we are seeing worldwide. Even countries like Japan are showing gradual increases in attitudes favorable to violence. Most western countries are seeing violence rates increasing by 200 to 500 percent over the past 20 years, led by my own United States of America."[34]

When speaking with Dr. Radecki, he reconfirmed the fact that the impact of violent entertainment is so gradual that the average person will never notice the shift in attitudes and behavior. However, there is simply no way children or adults can enjoy as much violence as they are watching and not be harmfully affected in some way. For many it leads to desensitization towards violence. He also stressed parents should look at how their children respond to these types of programs. "A healthy response to violent and sadistic programs is to be frightened. If parents have children who have seen a show like *Friday the 13th* and have not been scared or had nightmares, *then the parents should really be worried.*"

"If there is a program which shows violence or is inappropriate, go all the way and turn it off," emphasizes Dr. Radecki. "Even if you or your children have critical viewing skills, it has been shown that the viewing of violence still has long term effects. Researchers have shown that the more violent programming children watch, the more likely they will act out violence. *The best solution to critical viewing of violent television is not to watch it at all!*"

"Creativity is far more consequential than knowledge in furthering the significant advances of mankind."
Albert Einstein

Chapter 11

Creating Your Own Images

According to psychologists Jerome and Dorothy Singer, "The human imagination is still one of the great untapped resources for the development of the growing child's ability to learn, to evolve a sense of self, and simply to enjoy the pleasures of his or her own creative capacities."[1]

Children who are able to use their imagination and combine it with rational thinking can gain insight, flexibility of thought, and develop their problem-solving skills.[2]

The Singers have found imaginative play has specific benefits for children. They found children who engage in make-believe games are more likely than unimaginative peers to be happy and cooperative with peers. Imaginative play also allows children to build their vocabulary and learn roles for new social situations. This type of play also demands that children use imagery—the ability to replay from memory a previous experience. This ability to organize and utilize complex information allows them to picture how they might want to behave in the future and gives flexibility in new social situations. Pretending and talking to themselves can also help children develop self-control during such waiting situations and will make them less likely to become upset or aggressive. Finally, fantasy play increases creativity by increasing their ability to explore new contexts and to try out new situations in odd combinations. This exploration of novelty makes children sensitive to the creativity of others

and also lays the groundwork for their own creative development.[3]

The Creative Part of Cartoons

As children watch television and movies they see cartoon characters speed across the screen. Their focus is on the final product—a robot saving the hero or ponies flying through the air. The process, that of animation, is rarely considered.

Most children know that animated characters are different from real people. However, there are many children that do not know how they are made or animated. Introducing animation to children can open up an uncharted field for creative exploration.

A simple place to begin is with a flip book. Easily made with pads of paper, remember to place the first drawing on the last page so that the next page can fall forward covering it. To create movement, you must trace the previous drawing and alter each successive drawing in a minor way. These small changes accumulate and produce the illusion of movement.[4]

After having a chance to play around with a pad of paper, your child may benefit from using standardized index cards, recommends Kit Laybourne, author of *The Animation Book*, an excellent book for family reference. These cards have the advantage of being thicker, thus flipping more efficiently, and have greater flexibility because you can remove or change a card without weakening the binding. To hold them together use a binder clip or staple in the middle of the card and you have two flip books—one on each end. The one disadvantage is the cards are more difficult to see through than paper. Laybourne recommends making a light table by taking a piece of plexiglass and placing a bright light underneath. The light projects upward from beneath the surface, so you can see the previous drawing.

According to Laybourne, the biggest single misconception about animation is that you need to be an artist. He explains that animators require few innate skills and talents—and they are not the ones you would expect. An animator must be fascinated with the way things move and must be a keen observer of the world. He or she must also be an actor of sorts in order to give a cartoon figure character. An animator must know how to think and enjoy the process of identifying a problem and then working out its solution. "Sloppy thinking and lazy execution guarantees failure," he points out. Also, the art of animation requires "liberal measures of patience, precision, perseverance, and pride." Laybourne notes these are not innate skills as much as elements of one's character.

According to Dr. Abraham Maslow, a pioneer in the field of humanistic psychology, primary creativity "is very probably a heritage of every healthy human being and is found in all healthy children." So why are many of today's children bored when the TV goes off? Thomas Edison may have found the answer to this question with his statement, "Invention is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."[5]

Laybourne based his book on the axiom that "everyone is creative and that with hard work and encouragement, everyone can come up with good ideas." To encourage insight and creativity, he suggests purchasing a large *Idea Book* which is a large (11"X14") spiral sketchbook where a child can freely jot ideas and images and keep clippings and postcards.

By reading *The Animation Book* a family can learn that 19th century mechanical toys that created illusion of movement were the ancestors of animated films. One such toy was a Thaumatrope. A replica can be made out of a round disk of cardboard that has two pieces of string attached. If you wanted to make a picture of a mouse in a hole, you would draw a mouse in the center of one side of the disk and a large circle on the other side of the disk. As the disk is

twirled by spinning the string between thumbs and forefinger, the mouse's image is superimposed on the hole and they are perceived as being one picture.[6]

For those children and adults interested in extending this study of animation further, there is information on cameraless animation where the animator can draw on clear leader—celluloid 16 mm film that has no photographic image on it. There is also manipulation of materials like clay which opens up possibilities for creating such moving creations as the famous dancing raisins seen on commercials. For older children with an assisting adult, there is extensive information on advanced animation production.

For children and families interested in creating radio programs, newscasts or movies, Don Kaplan has an excellent array of lead up activities and guidelines for final products in his book, *Children and Media*. Interested in adding background sounds or music for a movie on man in space, city sounds, sea animals or insects? Birch Tree Group, Ltd. has an extensive array of records which may fit the bill. (See Appendices)

A Time for Stories

In order for children to build their vocabularies, they need to talk with others, read books, solve problems and expand their thoughts through creative imagination.

There are many creative activities that children and families can enjoy. They can create their own game boards or become story tellers. Telling a story, much like dramatic play, lets children master their imaginings and the problems they confront. Story tellers often tell stories as a means for answering questions, much like Indians began their stories about life and nature.

Children get untold joy from telling a story and then watching it take on life for others. Generally, once a story is told, other children will be eager to tell their tale of a recent event, compose a silly set of actions or create a new version

Children get untold joy from telling a story and then watching it take on life for others.

of the story they have just heard. This activity not only lets children talk with their peers but lets them learn to rely on their memory and begin to organize their ideas and express them—all basic for language development. By using their words, children are learning a principal way of communicating—for telling a story is much like sharing a conversation. Providing children with the chance to become more fluent at expressing their ideas and opinions also helps them build self-confidence and self-esteem.

In a time of videos and television, oral storytelling is becoming a lost art—for adults as well as children. Children who have grown up with visual stimulation in correlation with an oral message often find it difficult to simply listen to a story. Listening, however, is an active process. Unlike hearing, which is passive, listening requires the person to have conscious attention and rely on their background and knowledge to apply to what they hear.[7]

Finding that special time during the day, to let children share their personal adventures and tales of fantasy, can be an exciting and rewarding experience for all.

As children hear stories it expands their awareness and they acquire an interest in writing their own stories. They can put themselves in space, on a raging river or on a trip with Lewis and Clark. They can invent stories that include creatures or dinosaurs.

There are some families who have helped children organize writing clubs. They supply a space where children come together, store their materials, and use their creative skills. For those interested in such an activity, there are writing contests that are available to children of various ages. Raintree Publishers has a "Publish-A-Book Contest" for children in 4th, 5th and 6th grades. Children write stories 700-800 words in length. Each year they have a different theme. There is a monetary award for the winner and the 25 honorable mentions as well as free copies of the book when it is published.

Another story contest is sponsored by *Cricket* magazine. Each month there is a different theme and it has a limit of 350 words. First, second, and third prizes are awarded for two age groups: 5-9 year olds and 10-14 year olds. There is a guide available that contains more than 70 national contests for students in grades K-12, including magazines that will accept student entries for articles, poems and artwork and other publishing companies that will consider queries from student authors. For more information on the above contests see the Appendices.

Imagery From Songs

Images are also created in our mind when we read books or hear stories. One way to demonstrate that each person has a particular image of what they hear is to have each member of the family or group of children draw a picture of a particular scene or thing they have heard about but not seen. An example is listening to Pete Seeger sing the story of a creature called "Abiyoyo" and then drawing the creature. The following pictures are how a few school-age

children imagined what Abiyoyo would look like:

Another excellent imagery tape is *Tracking the Wild Wooley Cat* by Dennis Hysom. An incredibly innovative look at nursery rhymes, it uses clever lyrics and captivating music mixed with a great sense of humor. The characters include a hang-gliding mouse (rather than the mouse who went up the clock); and there is Elizabeth Moo, an astronaut who receives wise words of world peace from the Man in the moon only to be met with distrust from home base saying, "He may be a spy." This tape's upbeat energy makes it a hit with children of all ages.

For families looking for these cassette tapes or others which are educational, respectful of life and able to inspire the delicate magic of a child's imagination, I suggest writing to Music for Little People. This company carries tapes of high quality and selections for children and families such as traditional Native American tales, as well as folk and classical music. The company has created many alternative activities to television for children, but due to numerous requests of parents they also provide a selection of videos. One exceptional video is *Be a Magician* by Imagination Tree. For children fascinated by magic, a magician clearly demonstrates a group of magic tricks with the assistance of a young helper. By replaying each sequence over and over again these great tricks can be mastered. This video comes complete with magic wand and materials need for your child's own show. It is recommended for children 8 and above, but younger ones with concentration skills will do fine.

Creative Problem Solving

Two fascinating books which encourage creative problem solving which families can enjoy are *Stories to Solve: Folktales from Around the World* and *Anno's Hat Tricks*.

George Shannon, author of *Stories to Solve: Folktales from Around the World* (Greenwillow, 1985), has taken

fourteen timeless folktales from around the world which contain a mystery or problem for the characters to solve. Then it is up to the reader to figure out how it was done.

One such story, "The Cleverest Son," describes an old man who has three sons. He needs to decide who will inherit the farm and house and his decision will be based on which son could use a coin to buy something that would fill a room in the house. The eldest son bought a wagon full of straw and the middle son bought sacks and sacks of feathers—neither filled the room. The reader is asked to figure out what the youngest son bought that filled the room. Our family came up with the smell of essence from incense and the smoke from a fire—neither was correct. Can you think of a possible answer? I suggest reading the book and finding out the answer to this and other intriguing stories.

Anno's Hat Tricks by Akihior Nozaki (Philomel Books, 1985) is an imagination-stretching picture book. Renowned artist Mitsumasa Anno joins mathematician Akihior Nozaki to introduce young readers to the concept of binary logic, the basis of computer "thinking" and of mathematical problem-solving. By a clever pictorial device, Anno makes you, the reader, a central character in the book and you, along with your friends Tom and Hannah, share the fun of figuring out the answers to the hatter's tricky questions. The puzzles really teach how scientists look at all possible answers to a problem, check each one against the known facts, eliminate those that don't fit, and thus arrive at the correct answer. These question puzzles with appealing pictures begin easy and then become more challenging.[8]

A fascinating tool to help children learn organizational skills and develop creativity is a working maze of blocks called *Blocks and Marbles*. Made up of hardwood blocks, chutes and slides, this toy allows children and adults to create block structures which guide marbles through an endless variety of mazes.

Daily use of creativity is relevant in more than literature or art, point out the Singers.[9] Children are often placed in

new situations where they are asked to meet new people and make decisions. If a child is in a frightening or frustrating situation, he can use his imaginative and creative skills to lighten his mood for a moment or discover a different way of coping with the situation. Learning to make choices and problem-solve will help children survive creatively.

"Time is a child's most precious possession...A child who is helped to make productive use of his or her time has received one of the greatest advantages parents can bestow."
Joan Bergstrom

Chapter 12
Taking Charge

If you have decided to cut down your children's television viewing time, be sure they are ready to find acceptable alternatives. Today children's lives are often filled with activities from the time they are toddlers with play groups until they are involved in after school sports, dance, or choir. Many times school-age children are so accustomed to having choices made for them that they can be at a loss when given an opportunity to choose for themselves. If there is spare time with nothing to do, children often turn to television for immediate gratification.

Setting Goals with New Activities

One way to expand your children's goal setting is to have them think of abilities they would like to improve or characteristics they would like to develop. As adults we often make New Year's resolutions about abilities or attitudes or things we would like to improve. Your children can take part in similar planning, especially if you help them discuss their wishes. They can start by completing phrases such as: "I wish I knew how to...," "I wish I had...," "I want to help other people by..."

Explain that these wishes are actually goals and might not be attainable immediately. However, point out that there are steps which will move them closer to their goals.

For example, if a child wishes he could have a radio-controlled airplane—you could help him look at alternatives such as earning money, starting a savings account, reading books on airplanes, or learning where to look for used model-airplane parts.

Activity ideas on crafts, hobbies, and games are plentiful at the library or local book store. Other options can include mathematical art, photography, wood working, C.B. radio, cooking, local clubs or part-time jobs. There are some computer programs that encourage creativity; however, most do not fulfill the children's social needs.

Volunteer activities are an interesting and rewarding option. It can give children the opportunity to work with other children and adults in the community. It's interesting to note that researchers studying three Canadian communities which recently received television service came across an unusual finding. They learned that as soon as television was available to the community, not only did fewer young people attend community activities but so did fewer older adults. Therefore, there were less opportunities for intergenerational interaction.

A journal or diary in which children can list goals and keep a record of activities and experiences is helpful. This can include accomplishments, questions, frustrations, planning notes, or new ideas. Teachers who have used this activity have found picking one day of the week for children to reflect on their work encourages them to write down their feelings. In the following months, they can look back at the journal and see their accomplishments and their changing outlooks on activities.[1]

Joan Bergstrom, author of the informative book, *School's Out Now What?*, describes out-of-school time as a precious commodity. She feels it is the parents' role to help their children find appropriate ways to encourage the "3Rs": resourcefulness, responsibility and reliability. To help children take charge and do things on their own, "parents must articulate what they mean by being responsible, have

patience to be consistent in expecting and rewarding responsible behavior." She also notes that nurturing a child's interest is gradual and parents must be willing to learn from experience.

By the time children are 6- to-10-years old, they begin to see the reasoning behind cause and effect and are able to solve problems or make some decisions on their own. However, Bergstrom notes parents should be aware that as a result of these problem-solving skills developing so rapidly, children's limited experience may affect their decisions. During this time of growth when children are finding alternative ways of filling their time, mistakes, messes and failures will occur. Other possible changes to be aware of are the house can become noiser because of more social activity and the budget allocations may change with the increased need for extra supplies. Children will be more apt to try new things such as drawing, cooking or taking up a new sport if the family is supportive and gives positive feedback on their mistakes.[2]

You may find it useful to help your children make a weekly schedule for after school activities or part of the weekend, although it should be remembered that kids need to have time to unwind after school. For some this will require room to jump, run and get rid of excess energy. For others, it may mean time to find a quiet place to sit and do nothing, read, or quietly eat a snack.

Making Choices

Often families work within constraints of time pressure, transportation or limited funds. It is common for a parent or caregiver to say, "Why don't you go shoot some baskets?" or "Go outside and get some fresh air." An alternative is to guide children to take the responsibility by asking them what they feel like doing and then providing materials and support. An example of this was given by Sue Lawyer, author of *How to Work with School-age Children and Love Them*. She told of a child who asked her mother if she and

her friends could tour the studio of her favorite rock radio station. They weren't sure if tours were given. The mother declined to make the call, but suggested the girl call and find out about setting up a visit. The girl called and ended up talking to her favorite disc jockey. She also made all the arrangements, set the date in consultation with her mother, made a sign-up sheet, and then went. Basically, all the mother had to do was arrange transportation.

Bonnie Johnson, editorial manager of *School Age NOTES*, points out that this type of planning arrangement gives school-age children more than the activity itself—it gives them respect and self-confidence. It also allows them opportunities to develop valuable skills including decision-making, time-management, planning and implementing ideas, taking responsibility for one's actions and creative thinking.[3]

Responsibility as a Family Member

Taking care of one's personal possessions and taking on responsibility around the house can be part of a weekly schedule. According to Dr. Edna Copeland, a child clinical psychologist, "Enthusiastic participation in the tasks of living is one of the most meaningful but perhaps one of the most neglected areas of family life today." She suggests letting children participate in the planning and have as much choice as possible in choosing when and how the task gets done. Parents need to set realistic standards, making the tasks age-appropriate and dividing the tasks into manageable portions.

Once choices have been made it is beneficial to use a chart to keep order. Some advantages of charts are they add variety and give immediate positive rewards. Charts also add order by rotating jobs which helps children develop more skills. They also cut down sibling rivalry by clarifying that everyone will have a chance at each job.[4]

Parents need to be aware that children require help to master the skills involved in their new jobs. This may include

learning the proper way to load the dishwasher, clean the fish aquarium, or change the oil in the truck. Often times these chores can become family activities where children can enjoy their parents' companionship.

One of the most valuable things you can do with your children costs no money. It can stimulate your children's interests, emotional development, imagination and language. Interested?

Reading Aloud

According to Jim Trelease, author of *The Read-Aloud Book*, reading books aloud with your children is possible only if you are willing to invest your time and your interest. It is through modeling reading and taking the time to read to children that you can share literature which provides meaning to their lives. Children must have the desire to read—"readers aren't born; they're made."

By reading aloud you can allow children the excitement and pleasure of books they aren't quite ready or willing to read. Also, Trelease notes, if fathers become involved in reading with the family, he can do a lot to elevate books to the same status as sports or other male oriented activities.

Trelease stresses picking a book that is interesting and exciting to hold their attention while you're building up their imagination. For those children who are not experienced readers, it will take some time to learn the pleasures of listening to a story or reading a book. "No experience means no concept; no concept means no attention span."[5]. In other words, a child must be aware of what is coming before he will have the desire to sit for a length of time to listen. Therefore, you need to keep the initial readings short enough to fit the child's attention span and gradually lengthen them. When it is time to put the book down, stop at an exciting spot so there is anticipation for the next reading. Don't plan to leave a book for a few days and expect them to have the same interest.

Also, be flexible. If you get a book that is terribly boring, take the initiative to stop reading it. However, Trelease notes, if possible try to continue in a book which may seem to move slowly because of character development. For unlike television, books have the ability to let children think about what they read or hear and react by asking questions or simply studying the pictures. This social experience of reading together allows parents a chance to answer children's questions, help expand their vocabulary and learn what their child is thinking.

As with most positive behaviors, it is best to introduce them to children when they are young. One study by Benjamin Bloom found 50 percent of the intelligence that a child will have at maturity is already formed by the age of 4. It was also found that early reader's home environment included a child being read aloud to, a variety of printed material available, paper and pencil available, and parents to stimulate their interest in reading and writing by answering endless questions, and praising a child's efforts.[8]

Suggestions for Young Children

Young children from toddlers to the middle grades can enjoy wordless books with simple plots. The pictures tell the stories and each child can use his experience to tell his version of what is happening. We often enjoy picking out books by Peter Spier. He is an excellent writer-illustrator that has created numerous detailed illustrated books such as *Noah's Ark*, *Rain*, and *People*, which attract many children's wondering eyes and imaginations.

Picture books range from the wonderful classics of Dr. Seuss to Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* which is a simple book about the relationship between a tree and boy who grows to be an old man. This friendship is based on love and sharing. They can be as entertaining as James Stevenson's *That Terrible Halloween Night* which tells a grandfather's story of his childhood adventure and Steven Kellogg's *The Mysterious Tadpole* which tells how a boy raises a tadpole

who is a descendent of the Loch Ness Monster. Older children can be similarly intrigued by Florence P. Heide's fascinating *The Shrinking of Treehorn* which tells of a boy who shrinks more and more each day, only to be ignored by his parents and teacher who simply talk about his problem. (He has to solve the problem himself.)

A magazine that has wonderful stories, letters and features—some of which are written by children—is *Cricket*. Its stories and activities are suitable for a wide range of children approximately 5- to 14-years of age. *Cricket* can be borrowed from most libraries or purchased from Open Court Publishing Company.

Poetry books are often thought to be uninteresting. However, children usually enjoy them as much as other books if the reader is enjoying them. Trelease's rules for retaining or developing a love of poetry within children are: read it aloud; read it often; keep it simple; keep it joyous, spooky or exciting. Two popular poetry books for school-age children are Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* and *The Light in the Attic*. For younger children, I recommend Robert Frost's *Stopping by the Woods*, illustrated by Susan Jeffers, and *Hailstones and Halibut Bones* by Mary O'Neill. Don't forget the classics such as *The Golden Book of Poetry* by Gertrude Elliott or *When We Were Very Young* by A.A. Milne.

So far, in the eight years I have been reading to our children, we have covered a wide span of books but have really only hit the surface. Each week we go to the library and each one of us picks six or eight books. Jamie at eight is into reading Walter Farley's *Black Stallion* books and enjoys picking nonfiction animal books—particularly the Raintree Publishers series *Nature Close-Ups*, and *Animals in the Wild*, which contain excellent photographs. Holly at seven reads every Berenstain Bear book and enjoys listening to the tales of *Babar* the elephant by Laurent de Brunhoff. Todd, at four has left the picture books for the moment and jumped into nonfiction books on dinosaurs and archaeology. We

spend a lot of time reading captions under pictures, re-reading paragraphs, summarizing what is going on, and answering lots of questions.

Over the last year we have read a few short novels that have kept the interest of all involved. They include *The Littles* by John Peterson about a colony of six inch people who live inside the walls of the Bigg family's house; *Superfudge* by Judy Blume which tells of a boy growing up with an active little brother; and *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean George which tells of a boy who leaves the city to go live in a tree in the woods. An excellent book to activate a child's image making capabilities, *My Side of the Mountain*, absorbs the readers' attention and allows him to visualize the algae pancakes, playful otter and magnificent soaring peregrine hawk. Our family was able to relate to this story when we went hiking. The children kept their eyes open for trees they could live in, ways to trap animals for food or create a fishing line and hook.

A favorite short novel of every librarian I have spoken to is Ronald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*. It tells of a boy who goes to live with his aunts and ends up adventuring inside a giant peach full of fascinating characters. As Trelease noted, this book can hold the attention and lift the imagination of children from 6 to 11 years of age.

Reading fairy tales or Greek myths is a choice for the reader. I myself have found that reading these tales has added depth to our reading selection over the years. Also, there is no better place for a child to discuss the fear of separation from family, coping with a dragon (or bully at school), or the frustration of not being accepted, than sitting close to an adult they trust.

What of the boy who is being asked to cut his time from watching *G.I. Joe* or *Thundercats*? Choices might include books on mystery, sports, or classics such as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Adventure books are always popular, particularly the adventure series, *Choose Your Own Adventure*. These books, aimed at students about 8-years and up,

let the reader decide the direction each story takes. Each book contains as many as 24 choices—leading up to more than a dozen endings.[7]

Two series of books which are of interest to many young children are the dinosaur and ice-age animal series by Rourke Enterprises. These books with titles of the animals such as *Dimetrodon*, *Iguanodaon*, and *Mastodon* hold the listeners' attention with vivid descriptions of the animals' physical characteristics, habits and natural environment. The text is supplemented with colorful illustrations.

Suggestions for Older Children

What if your child or children are older, have transcended into television viewing, and left the books on their shelves? Make reading fun and interesting. One of the first things to remember when introducing books to older children is to find a time when they will not be distracted by telephone calls from friends, anxious to watch their favorite television program, or have planned other activities with friends. By setting a routine time, before bed or right after dinner, both children and adults will enjoy the experience more. As Trelease stated, "Mood is an important factor in listening."

The next thing to remember is to downplay the educational aspect of reading. Reading at school often entails reading skills and workbooks. So at home keep stories centered around children's interests and keep pace with their growth. At the beginning you may want to share books only several times a week and read just a page or two depending on interest.

If you are unsure where to look for good books on certain topics, some possible references would be your school or public librarian. If they have a limited selection, check the *Children's Catalog* of the *Subject Guide to Children's Book in Print*, and inquire about interlibrary loans.

For those hard to interest children, try reading *Paul*

Harvey's The Rest of the Story (by Paul Aurandtor). Two other high interest sources are *Reader's Digest* and a compiled set of their stories *Unforgettable Characters*.

There is no more valuable activity than taking the time to sit with your children and read a good book. As Trelease confirms, "More than helping them to read better, more than exposing them to good writing, more than developing their imagination, when we read aloud to children we are helping them to find themselves and to discover some meaning in the scheme of things."

For a list of resources to learn of books which are children's favorites, see the Appendices.

"If we celebrate with children their own love of life, accept their self-affirmation, and help them learn how to be assertive and deal with aggression, we may contribute to their self-belief and reduce their need to resort to violence."
Charles Smith

Chapter 13

Solving Problems Without Shooting

Conflict is common at home and in the classroom. There are disagreements over personal space, what child should come first, the ownership of property, and exclusion from activities.

Conflict is not all bad. According to Charles Smith, Human Development Extension Specialist at Kansas State University, it is through conflict that children realize others have different ideas and this realization enables them to become less self-centered. Emotional ties can be strengthened through conflict by helping to understand other people's perceptions. If children in conflict stand up for their ideas without ignoring or harming the other person, mutual respect and close, affectionate ties become possible.[1]

William Kreidler, author of *Creative Conflict Resolution*, labels aggression not as an emotion but an expression of emotion. The crucial factor is the intent to harm. To better understand various types of aggression Terry Orlick has defined them in his book, *Winning Through Cooperation* (Acropolis, 1978): 1) *Accidental aggression* which is unintentional, such as a child bumping another child as he runs by. 2) *Instrumental aggression* which is goal oriented, such as a

young child pushing another child off a trike with no real intent to harm him. 3) *Destructive aggression* which intends to inflict pain, such as a child hitting another in frustration. 4) *Defensive aggression* which can arise when self-assertiveness isn't successful. For example, if a child is hit and his comments such as, "Don't hit me, I don't want to fight," are of no help, he may push or shove the child who hit him as a defensive confrontation.

As parents and teachers, we need to help children exhibit their desire for influence by developing self-esteem, and teach them to learn how to be assertive and deal with aggression. Smith points out, "If we continually frustrate children's desire for influence, we may unwittingly contribute to the very expression and acceptance of violence which we are trying to prevent."[2]

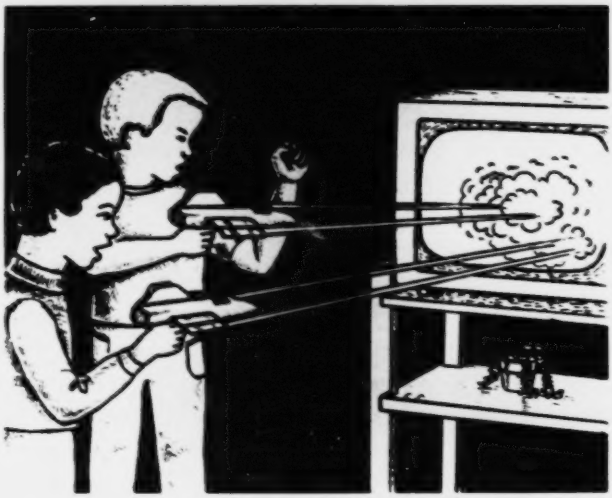
According to Rollo May, author of *Power and Innocence*, power is not the same as force or competition—it is the ability to make a difference in our own self-realization.[3] "Children's ideas about power and its limitations can affect the way they relate to others," Smith explains. Children who think others are out to defeat them or shame them may become intensely competitive or withdraw to avoid conflict.[4]

Children's Perspectives

The other day my 7-year-old daughter came in and complained that her sister had tripped her intentionally. Afterwards I learned it was in response to the disappointment of not having a hand-made present accepted. This type of aggression was brought about by the adage of "an eye for an eye" and was thus justified in her mind. The situation was an example of low-keyed violence where the victim was more annoyed than hurt. A similar incident occurred when the children were outside playing and now my 4-year-old son was the victim of the 7-year-old. He came in crying that his sister tagged him too hard when they were

playing and caused him to fall. When I went out to learn more about the situation, I found the overly aggressive tag was an accident. Unfortunately, my son interpreted the incident as an aggressive act rather than accidental. The ability to recognize the reasons behind another's behavior and then discriminate between a seemingly or truly aggressive act can depend on the child's age and social experiences. This stands up to researchers' findings that when children are around 5- or 6-years-old they can begin to discriminate or evaluate the reasons behind aggression.[5]

Smith points out that children's views of how to gain influence are affected by their beliefs about rules. They may have definite ideas on what is right and what is wrong, yet their ideas about morality or customs may not be the same as an adult's.[6] Another factor of a child's view of "an eye for an eye" lies in role models that he is exposed to. If he is taught



"...if violence is the only alternative children can envision to resolve a conflict, then brute force can be expected when problems occur in their relationships."

Charles Smith

by his peers, parents or television heroes that it is important to save face and retaliate when imposed upon, he may overreact when a conflict situation arises.

As children reach elementary school-age their ability to solve problems is enhanced by their ability to appreciate other's feelings and points of view. In his book, *Promoting the Social Development of Young Children* (Mayfield, 1982), Smith notes that competitive stress is sometimes related to being less empathic and less kind:

> Children in our culture may learn to perceive that winning requires a conflict of interest. For example, "For me to win, you have to lose." They overlook the potential for mutual gain that can occur with cooperation and cooperative competition. This emphasis on being an exclusive winner is especially evident in boys. If children learn to disregard others, they may never learn how successful they might be if they could count on other's help.(p.178)[7]

A Sense of Influence Without Hurting

Children need to realize that anger is a legitimate feeling and learn that there are proper ways to handle or express it. Rather than using physical aggression, using put-downs or threats, they need to verbalize anger in a positive way. This can include telling the other person how you feel or what he did that you didn't like.

In *Promoting the Social Development of Young Children*, Smith suggests the following:

1) *By encouraging children to be reasonably self-assertive, we can help them develop a sense of competence which contributes to their self-esteem.*
2) *We can share power with children by giving them a voice in many of the decisions which affect them.* "Children who feel that they are worthwhile and important and can influence their lives will have no need for aggressive violence."
3) *We can examine and eliminate potential causes of violence in our classroom [and homes].*[8] This can be

accomplished be setting limits, responding to children when they have successfully solved a problem nonviolently, and being a role model of nonviolence.

4) *We can talk with children and explore their ideas about conflict.*

5) *We can allow a reasonable amount of play fighting among children in game activities and free play.* "Rough-and-tumble play is natural for children, and it may strengthen their relationships with others and lead to cooperative behavior.[9] As long as roughhousing is playful, children can enjoy the contact and match their strength and physical ability to that of others. The opportunity to display strength safely and to experience the strength of others may build mutual respect."

6) *We can explore with children effective responses to the aggression and violence of others.* This can include exploring alternatives to finding an adult such as using words and even running away if necessary.

7) *We can establish cooperative goal structures in our classrooms [and homes] by emphasizing working together to accomplish tasks.*

8) *We can emphasize cooperative forms of competition.* However, Smith notes, "We do not need to avoid all forms of competition because children want to compare their skills with those of others. In some situations, when risk of failure is not too intense, they may accomplish more if competition is a part of the activity. Two guidelines should be considered for making competition effective: first, it should not overshadow cooperative activities, and second, children should be encouraged and bring out the best in others. With this kind of support, competition can be enjoyable and rewarding."

How Do You Think He Feels?

You walk into the room and there are two upset children. You ask what happened. The response is, "Michael

always has the stereo on and I want to listen to the radio." What do you do?

There are several ways to approach this problem. One is to look at the situation as containing an aggressor and victim. The other is to look and focus on the feelings of both children. Parent educator, Elizabeth Crary suggests that to negotiate a problem it is first important to gather information which includes understanding how everyone involved feels. "You can help children understand how other people feel by asking them to look at another child and tell you how they think that child feels, or ask them to remember how they felt in a similar situation."[10] Once this takes place it is easier to define a problem in terms of what both children want to happen. "What can you do so you can listen to the car race on the radio and Michael can listen to the stereo?"

In her practical book, *Kids Can Cooperate: A Practical Guide to Problem Solving* (Parenting Press, 1984), Crary explains, "The parent's job in assisting children to negotiate is to help them focus on the problem and to act as a 'blackboard.' To do that, present the problem and wait for your children to suggest alternatives." Resist the temptation to suggest ideas or the children will assume their own ideas are not good enough. Once ideas are generated, then evaluate the consequences. For example: "What might happen if you go over and turn off the stereo?"

"Resist the temptation to judge the ideas," Crary suggests. A child's problem solving ability correlates with the number of different ideas he has and not the number of good ideas. "Parents will not always be around to tell a child that his idea is not good and to suggest another. You will be more helpful in the long run by encouraging your child to evaluate an idea himself and see why it is unacceptable."

Once the child has thought the ideas through and evaluated them, restate the problem, summarize the ideas and let your children decide which idea they will try. "If your child chooses an alternative that you think will not work, be sure he knows what he will do next."

Points to Remember

"The process of teaching problem solving often seems tedious, but it gives children practice thinking up and evaluating alternatives for their own situations." Crary's statement is followed up by guidelines for parents in facilitating problem solving. Children will learn to resolve conflicts more easily if adults keep these points in mind.

1. *Encourage solutions where everyone wins.* Help the child focus on people's feelings. The goal is a solution which will allow everyone some satisfaction.

2. *Avoid criticizing ideas.* When a child generates ideas, do not judge the ideas yourself. Part of the assisting role is helping the child to evaluate his own ideas. If a child says, "I could hit Jimmy," say, "Yes, you could hit Jimmy. What might happen then?" rather than, "Oh no, we don't hit. That's not nice." If the child comes up with several ideas like hitting and punching and pinching, you can say, "Hitting, punching, and pinching are all hurting ideas. What is something different you can do?" Focus on generating more ideas rather than evaluating the ideas.

3. *Focus on children's ideas.* Do not offer your ideas while you are helping children negotiate. Parents are often tempted to offer children ideas; however, if you give children ideas they may assume your ideas are better than theirs or that you do not think they can think of any ideas that are suitable. If you want to expand the alternatives a child can think of, do it later. One constructive way to do that is to role play with puppets or make up a story which brings in some new ideas on how to handle those problems.

4. *Review the problem frequently.* It is easy for children to become distracted from the problem. To help them focus on the content, repeat the problem statement each time you ask for ideas. For example, "How can you get a turn on the tricycle [bike] and still have your friend feel happy?"

5. *Act as a blackboard.* Many children have difficulty remembering the ideas they think of and thinking of new ideas at the same time. When adults remember the ideas, children can concentrate on generating ideas. For example, "You could ask him to get off the swing, you could knock him

off, or you could go inside and play with the building blocks." Repeating all the ideas each time may seem tedious to parents, but it is important to children because it lets them see the list grow and know that their ideas are important.

6. *Focus on content, not grammar.* Do not worry about grammar. If the child uses a double negative or gets his sentence scrambled, let it pass. When you summarize the idea you can rephrase it grammatically, but do not ask the child to repeat the correction.

"Once children understand alternatives, and that different behaviors have different consequences, you can begin to help children negotiate when they have quarrels," Crary explains. The following is an example of this type of negotiation:

SHE POKED ME
Parent facilitates discussion.

Rachel and Martin were sitting on the sofa together. Martin was reading and Rachel was sewing some doll clothes. There was a loud scream. Mother looks up and sees Martin about to hit Rachel.

Mother: Okay Martin, what is going on here?
Martin: She poked me with her needle.
Rachel: No, I didn't. He bumped into my needle.
Martin: How could I bump into it if I was reading? Huh?
Mother: I can see you were hurt. I would like you to look at what options you have. What could you do to let Rachel know you don't like to be hurt?
Martin: I could poke her, and show her what it feels like.
Mother: You could poke her, what else could you do?
Martin: I could punch her or hit her.
Mother: You have thought of three ways to hurt her, what is something different you could do?
Martin: I could ignore her, but I don't want to.

Mother: You could hurt her or you could ignore her, what else could you do?
Martin: I could tell you, but you wouldn't do anything.
Mother: You could tell me, what else could you do?
Martin: I don't know.
Mother: Okay. You could hurt Rachel, ignore her, or tell me, what will you do?
Martin: I'm not sure.
Mother: None of those ideas look good to you. Can you think of something else?
Martin: Yeah. Demand she apologizes.
Mother: What would happen if you demanded an apology?
Martin: She'd say, "No!"
Mother: What else could you do?
Martin: I suppose I could ask her.
Mother: What do you think would happen?
Martin: If I was pleasant, she probably would apologize.
Mother: Are you ready to make a decision?
Martin: Yeah. I will ask her to apologize and move over so it won't happen again.

"Guidelines for Facilitating Problem Solving" and "She Poked Me," Copyright © 1984 by Elizabeth Crary, from *Kids Can Cooperate*, Used with permission of Parenting Press,Inc.

Staying Calm

When children are working on problems on their own they will have to have enough patience and self-confidence to be able to stop and think. There are various ways children can try to keep calm other than counting to ten. Young children can pretend the problem is in front of them and blow it away like a big bubble.[11] Crary suggests older children could visualize a protective shield like the ones in science fiction stories. "When you have visualized the shield, you can be calm and let the other person's anger pass you by." There are many books at the library that can introduce you and your child to yoga or other methods of self-control and relaxation that are beneficial to family members.

Older children can be taught to apply this problem solving process without assistance to all types of problems including social conflicts as well as "physical" problems. Once a child is calm, he can then define the problem and identify what each person wants. The next step is for him to think of alternative ways the problem can be solved and consider what the consequences of each may be. Then, he can proceed to carry out the method planned.

We need to remember that the child's age and inexperience have an effect on their self-control. However, even preschoolers can understand that they should think, talk, but not hit. As Smith notes, "The energy generated by anger should be put to use for positive goals, not feared for its destructive potential."[12]

Superheroes for Peace and Animal Weapons

For parents and teachers who are interested in bringing the concept of conflict resolution into the minds of children who are avid television viewers, the following two activities have been found useful:

Superheroes for Peace (Grades 2-6)

Materials: Drawing paper, crayons, scissors, paste, large paper for mounting, writing paper, pencils.

Procedure:

1. Have students work in groups of three or four. Explain that the task of each group is to develop a superhero or superheroes who resolve conflict nonviolently.
2. Students should draw pictures of their superheroes and cut out and mount the drawings on display paper. They should also write down:

1. The superhero's name
2. What power she or he has
3. How she or he resolves conflicts
4. Other interesting information

Discussion:

How does your superhero resolve conflicts?
How did you get your ideas?
Do you resolve conflicts the same way?

Animal Weapons (Grades K-6)

Materials: Pictures of animals with bared teeth, claws, quills, antlers, horns, or actual antlers, horns, teeth, etc.

Procedure:

Show the pictures or objects and ask the questions listed below to initiate a discussion on how animals defend themselves. When comparing people with animals, emphasize that our minds set us apart, enabling us both to create horrible weapons and to avoid weapons altogether.

Discussion:

How do animals use parts of their bodies to defend themselves?
In what situations will animals do that?
How is that similar to what people will do? Dissimilar?
What is it that enables us not to use weapons?
What are our alternatives to weapons?

"Superheroes for Peace" and "Animal Weapons" from *Creative Conflict Resolution* by William Kreidler. Copyright © 1984 by Scott, Foresman and Company. Reprinted by permission.

The Peace Museum

In Chicago, parents are aided in teaching their children conflict resolution skills through on-going activities and workshops at The Peace Museum. This unique institution, dedicated to exploring issues of war and peace through visual, literary and performing arts, is lead by curator Ruth Barrett. It helps children and their parents learn specific skills in coping in a world where there is and always will be some conflicts to contend with.

Throughout the year the museum has four different display-activity themes. Previously, a "Winners" exhibit

featured 20 different individuals who have had a role in supporting positive social programs. This included a 14-year-old boy who had started a shelter for the homeless as well as individuals who had won the Noble Peace Prize.

The museum also had a "Child's Play" exhibit, a hands-on activity centered program that introduced toys fun to play with and did not have a violent theme. "Children and parents came in and played together and learned of other alternative play activities," Barrett said. "The main purpose was to have parents look at the their children's toy box and see if the toys played a positive or negative role in the children's social development." Once parents were in that critical position, the museum staff suggested that it was time to balance the toy selection.

A recent children's exhibit is "Play Fair," which features dozens of hands-on displays and activities which will help teach young visitors the importance of non-violent conflict resolution. Some include the "Speak Your Peace" show, a pretend talk show set that children and parents can use to interview each other on current events or other topics; "The Island Game," a 'desert island' painted on the floor for children to play on and use cooperative skills to fit as many of their friends on at a time; and several computer games including "The Other Side," a simulation, role-playing game in which two teams of students must cooperate to build a bridge between nations using limited resources.[13]

Once exhibits have ended, the Museum rents them to schools, churches, museums, libraries and other organizations across the United States and abroad, through a traveling exhibition program.

For those parents and teachers interested in workshops on conflict resolution there are various national groups with state affiliates including Children's Creative Response to Conflict, Parenting for Peace and Justice, Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment as well as many local groups.

"Children who are led to discover for themselves their own and other people's motives in conflict situations will have more knowledge and therefore greater flexibility in responding to conflict," explains Priscilla Prutzman of Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC). Role playing, puppet shows and skits are other alternative methods of considering solutions to conflicts which families and teachers can use. "We find that as children are helped to discover for themselves their own alternatives to conflict in the situations which they experience, they find that the choice of alternatives often ranges far beyond the usual solutions. Creative responses may be limited only by the bounds of their own fertile imaginations. The process of trying for themselves various responses to situations allows experimental learning to occur, it helps children to develop and clarify their own values (an important essential in creative conflict resolution), and it leads to a realization that in the most effective solutions everybody 'wins'."[14]

> *"The child shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood."*
>
> U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child, principle 10 (1959)

Chapter 14

Whose Values Will Children Accept?

Children have to cope with many pressures in today's modern society. Unfortunately, one of the most powerful persuaders—television— gives children a distorted view of individuals and violence.

Xenophobia—The Fear and Hatred of Foreigners

According to Dr. Carole Lieberman, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA, not only are children becoming more aggressive as a result of playing with realistic toy weapons, but toy companies are telling the kids whom to direct their aggression at. Cartoons and war toy characters are often identifying the enemies as people of different races, causing some children to feel scared or uncomfortable around people of different nationalities or cultures. Lieberman first became aware of the problem when some of her young patients started expressing fear of strangers and foreigners in particular. She feels that such negative stereotyping can have far-reaching implications especially in a multi-ethnic city like Los Angeles. She stresses that one of the worst offenders are the *Rambo* cartoons

where the bad guys are SAVAGE and are world-wide terrorists.[1]

Another example of negative stereotyping and disrespect for others is found in the G.I. Joes series. For example, on the package of action figure Lt. Falcon—a Green Beret—it states: "Green Berets are specialists in training and lead native insurgents. Native insurgents are usually primitive tribal peoples who respond to two types of leadership. You can bully and overwhelm them with superior firepower and technology...or you can bite the head off a snake, chug-a-lug the local beverage and yell, Follow me!"

Stevanne Auerbach, a child psychologist who specializes in the relationship between toys and child development explains, "Toys teach children how to relate to each other and to the world. It stands to reason that if toy villains are from the Far East, that's how kids will see people in the real world."[2]

What positive steps can parents and teachers take to reduce the fear of strangers or foreigners? Lieberman suggests talking to the child about what frightens him about the other cultures or nationalities and to use discretion about when to allow the child to start watching news. Parents can encourage learning about others through reading books, listening to multi-cultural records, and visiting cultural museums. Personal contact is also important through community activities and can be done gradually by introducing children of other cultures into your child's social activities.

"Out of the Garbage Pail and Onto Your Screen"

This title used by Tom Shales in the *Washington Post* expresses the opinion of many people concerning CBSs new animated versions of the "Garbage Pail Kids" in its Saturday morning cartoon line up. The show, derived from drawings of mangled and deformed children is to be aired immediately after *Pee-wee's Playhouse* and is targeted at a very young audience.

Shale reports the heroine "Terry Cloth" will have her face on her hand and new character "Eliot Mess" is said to have his body parts not quite in the right order.

> While CBS insists that the TV series will not feature the mutilations, torture and disfigurement that have made the cards a strange, sick-humor sensation among American youngsters, the network does promise in publicity that the series will be "unorthodox, wild and wacky" and offer "short comedy blackouts straight from the offbeat humor of the cards"—such gags as "Fried Franklin's discovery of electricity.[3]

This show will give sanction to the cards and will project to children the acceptability of violence. Judy Price, CBS vice president for children's programming, was reported dismissing the argument that this supposedly nonviolent program will promote the clearly violent cards. "I don't find that an issue I'm concerned about because they've already sold a billion copies. This is very much a part of our popular culture."[4]

Our society is nurturing a tendency to accept grossness and violence as normal. In addition to research findings supporting that violent toys and violent television cause antisocial behavior, Dr. Bruce Bleichfeld, a child psychiatrist at Children's Hospital in Buffalo, has also found that for children with problems with impulse control the Garbage Pail Kids products are added disinhibitors.[5]

Watching this show or playing with the cards may give some children peer acceptance, but at what cost to their opinions and attitudes toward others? Carolyn Shadle, editor of *For Parents*, asserts that while some toys may be a test to their sense of humor, others may perpetuate negative attitudes by suggesting that physical abuse or making fun of overweight or disfigured children is okay.[6]

"Prime Time Vietnam"

Desensitization of violence will also be evident on

television with the arrival of interactive programming and such programs as *Tour of Duty*. As the promotion tape for *Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future* explains, this show will "change the way we look at TV forever," giving viewers the unique ability to participate in shooting the enemy from the "world of terrifying evil." Viewers are reminded by a hideous looking Lord Dread that "There is no place to hide!"

Tour of Duty, the first Vietnam-based weekly series mounted by a network, will bring into homes a view on the war from the eyes of a single combat platoon. As *Newsweek* reporter, Harry Walters explains in his article, "Prime Time for Vietnam," (August 31, 1987), "The problem is that CBS has decorously skirted precisely those elements that made Vietnam such a confusing and terrifying conflict...In their most biazarre ruling, the network's censors decreed that showing bodies being blown up was permissible, but showing them coming down to the ground was verboten."

The show airs at 7:00 PM Central time 8:00 PM Pacific and Eastern which broadcasters used to recognize as "The Family Hour." This hour of prime time has the highest proportion of viewers age 11 and under.[7] *Tour of Duty* will test the limits of parents' tolerance for violent entertainment.

Family Values

What can families do as they find themselves facing these controversial issues and negative values besides just turning off the television? Positive family values can be taught through modeling, but are also effectively learned through speaking openly about what one believes and how one feels.

Michael Pappas, author of *Prime Time for Families* (Winston Press, 1980) recommends, just as storekeepers take inventory from time to time, a family should get together periodically to take stock of its wants, needs, and concerns. In order for families to 'take stock'—focusing on themselves,

sharing feelings and setting goals—they need to arrange time to gather together and talk.

A natural time for family conversation is during an evening meal which has been arranged to be slow-paced and free of interruptions (which means keeping the television off). Many families who have cut down their evening television viewing have found they have extra hours in the day. This is an opportune time to let family members learn more about each other. This is also a good time to model listening, for it is a key element to good communication. If parents can listen to children without criticizing or judging the child, the child will feel supported and will listen to others.

Discussing children's fads which are often a form of rebellion is often difficult, yet not speaking about them may also have the effect of reinforcing such behavior as an acceptable norm. Sitting down with children and stating your views about new toys or new television programs and encouraging them to express their feelings is advised.

If there are trends desirable to your child and within your tolerance, you can have them think over the pros and cons by making a list. For those activities not acceptable, help your child decide how best to handle an undesirable situation when they are criticized for noncompliance among their friends.

Vicki Lansky, author of *Vicki Lansky's Practical Parenting Tips for the School-Age Years* (Bantam, 1985) suggests letting your child use YOU as a way out when he or she feels trapped by saying, "I'm not allowed to," or "I'll have to check first." She also recommends supporting and praising your child for having the wisdom and strength of character to resist peer pressure when it's best to do so.

As children play with others and watch television they are exposed to behavior and values which may not be acceptable to their parents. However, Carolyn Shandle, editor of *For Parents*, has found it appears that children who openly discuss the differences between values of others and

those of parents are better able to appreciate the values taught at home and intentionally choose behavior that is consistent with parental values.[8]

Three resources designed to enhance family communication are described and listed in the Appendices.

Emotions and Empathy

Our life is affected by how we deal with our emotions and how we relate to other people. Emotions can promote or interfere with personal development. If a child can understand another person's emotions or take on their perspectives, the child becomes skillful and confident in his relationship with others.

An excellent way to begin a discussion about emotions and consideration for the feelings of others is reading a story and then relating to it. Some worthwhile books to consider reading are *Alexander and the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day* by Judith Viorst and *One-eyed Cat* by Paula Fox.

Another excellent book for young children is *Why Does that Man have Such a Big Nose?* (Parenting Press, 1986). It can be used as a springboard for a discussion on people's physical and ethical differences. Author, Mary Beth Quinsey points out, "We need to help children channel their curiosity into a healthy appreciation for differences. 'Different' doesn't have to mean bad or wrong; we can use children's interest to help them recognize everyone's uniqueness and value."

Research has found that children who are tutored in role-playing activities or socio-dramas which include considering alternative actions in conflict situations are more likely to improve their social problem-solving skills. Young-Ok Kim of Peabody College, Vanderbilt University and Joseph Stevens, Jr., Georgia State University, point out in their article, "The Socialization of Prosocial Behavior in Children," (*Childhood Education* (February 1987), that

parents and teachers can help teach social behavior and can plan activities that call upon these prosocial abilities.[9]

Role-playing can also facilitate empathy as children begin to identify what others are feelings and thinking. This can be increased by having children switch roles and play the individual in need as well as the part of the helper.[10]

This holds true for older children as well. One study explained that when adolescent boys with an arrest record took part in a "little theatre group," where they played roles in drama and watched videotapes of the performance, their re-arrest records were less than those of a control group. The researchers concluded one possible explanation was that these boys gained information about the feelings of the characters they played. In other words, they learned about empathy.[11]

As parents and teachers, we need to recognize that we teach social behaviors. To encourage this we should accept our role and arrange the environment to promote social learning. By modeling and reinforcing prosocial behavior, providing joint decision-making opportunities and encouraging alternative solutions to conflicts, we provide children with a greater opportunity to accept positive values.

"A teacher has to be a prophet who can look into the future and see the world of tomorrow into which the children of today must fit."
Anonymous

Chapter 15

For Teachers:

As teachers we have a special responsibility to provide children with knowledge and positive social experiences so that they will recognize there are alternatives to approaching life's challenges other than those depicted by the glowing screen in their living room. This chapter is divided into three sections with emphasis on areas in which teachers can play an important role helping children cope with our high tech future.

Critical Viewing

There are many associations and groups around the country that have materials available to help teachers utilize television in the classroom. Drs. Jerome and Dorothy Singer of the Yale University Family Television Research Center and Diana M. Zuckerman of Radcliffe College, Harvard University, have developed a critical viewing curriculum, *Getting the Most Out of Television*. It places an emphasis on teaching 3rd to 6th grade children about the television medium and what it has to offer, enabling them to become discriminating viewers and consumers.

Another critical viewing program is *Critical Television Viewing: A Language Skills Work-A-Text* created by the New York public television station, WNET-13, with funding from the U.S. Office of Education. It is designed to help 5th to 9th grade students become more intelligent, discriminating television consumers while sharpening their language arts

and critical viewing skills.[1]

An updated resource list, *Classroom Curriculum Materials for Teaching Critical TV Viewing*, is available from Interpersonal Communication Services, Inc. (ICS). One of the goals of this private, non-profit corporation is to facilitate more effective communication between family members, students and teachers.

Understanding the Trends in Media

An activity which can encourage children to be critical viewers is to take part in the National Telemedia Council's *Look-Listen Opinion Poll*. This involves children filling out a form evaluating three new television programs as well as a "TV viewer" postcard. This procedure allows them to communicate directly with the broadcaster or advertiser of the program being evaluated. There are various follow-up activities such as making a collection of student reports to send to parents and local broadcasters, planning a trip to a local broadcasting station to question broadcasters, sharing opinions and results of opinion polls, and using the process of gathering and collating the results as a learning experience in math (statistics), research, and report writing.

The National Telemedia Council's newsletter *Telemedium*, often contains ideas for teachers as it supplies information on trends in media, suggested readings and articles of special interest. For example, Larry Johnson, a Video/Language Arts teacher at the Longfellow International School in Minneapolis and founder of the *Key of See Storytellers*, has developed video letters that allow children to see how schools in different places operate.[2] This electronic form of pen pal exchange is an exciting way for children to share how they spend their school days, what holidays they celebrate, show art work, tell stories or sing songs. Johnson notes, "The objective is not to demonstrate what good video programs the student can produce, but rather to let students learn about and make friends with

students in another area of the country or world."

For teachers looking for a resource which helps students understand how media affects them and supplies activities that can be integrated in the curriculum, I recommend *Children and Media* (Instructor, 1986) by Don Kaplan. It has activities involving radio, newspaper, television, video games and commercials. It also discusses making videotapes. This part of the curriculum helps children understand the process of television, "enables students to develop a sense of control and provides the means for expressing (and possibly changing) the things they care and are concerned about." The convenient part is that every page of the book is reproducible.

Sharing Interests and Concerns

Many teachers who have latch-key children—those children who spend time home alone after school—have found that incorporating critical television curriculums in the classroom allows children a chance to discuss the programs they watch and bring out any concerns or fears they may have. One fifth grade teacher explained, "Sure, we always have those who talk about how great some police drama was yet, we've also discussed a boy's concerns about military duties when he had viewed a part of the series *Anybody's Son Will Do*, (a documentary on the military) and the extinction of the panther discussed on a *National Geographic* Special. Also, when there is a discussion on a show like, *Spencer for Hire*, it allows us to bring up options for violence and gives me a chance to reinforce the fact that television dramas, in the most part, are fictional stories and often overemphasize violence. By learning what children watch, I can learn what their interests are and how they spend their time after school or in the evenings. For those who seem to spend an overabundance of time in front of the television, I try to help them create options and see that parents are informed of them."

As a teacher, you have opportunities to make parents aware of the dangers of children's viewing violent television/videos or participating in new aggressive interactive programs. (See Appendices for reproducible material for parents.) There are also opportunities for schools or entire school districts to promote critical television viewing not only to children, but to their parents. As a knowledgeable professional you can play an important role in organizing others in your community.

"A Warm and Caring Community"

Children learn social skills, values, moral judgments, and intellectual and physical skills through play. Unfortunately, children seem to be patterning their play after television violence rather than traditional roles of family members and community helpers, according to Joe Frost, Professor of Education at the University of Texas (Austin).

As a result of his findings—that 85 percent of the new television cartoons are war-oriented—he thinks it is important for parents and teachers to counter the focus on war and violence with an emphasis on peace.

"The point is, television is such a dramatic influence on children that it is difficult to help children tune it out in play," he said. "It's easier for children to learn war concepts than it is concepts of peace, because war has concrete examples—violence, hit, maim, kill. Peace is abstract and is more difficult for young children to learn."[3]

Nurturing a Cooperative Classroom

A peaceful, cooperative classroom can suggest different things to different people. In the book, *Creative Conflict Resolution* (Scott, Foresman, 1984), author William Kreidler explains that his definition of a "peaceable classroom" is not related to noise levels, class size, or open versus traditional teaching styles. It refers instead to a classroom that is a warm and caring community.

"Our job as educators is to nurture and support those students who have healthy, positive self-images, while at the same time helping students with low-self images to see themselves as more worthwhile, more able, and increasingly capable. It is not an easy task," confirm Chick Moorman and Dee Dishon, teachers and authors of *Our Classroom: We Can Learn Together* (Personal Power Press, 1983). They have found in addition to designing activities and processes that lead children to an ever-increasing awareness of themselves and their self-images, teachers can create an environment of acceptance and support that nurtures high self-esteem.

The purpose of *Our Classroom* is to help teachers create a classroom environment where discipline problems are less likely to occur, and where children are less likely to activate the new three Rs—Resistance, Reluctance, and Resentment. The "Our Classroom" feeling is being used in classrooms around the country to create "strong feelings of unity, group pride, and respect for others by living an active attitude of interrelatedness." "Our Classroom" is preventative by creating an environment where problems are less likely to arise. The teachers who use it believe that the time and energy spent preventing problems saves time and energy that would otherwise have to be spent later dealing with problems. The underlying assumptions relating to prevention are these: [4]

1. If students feel a sense of belonging, view the classroom as theirs, and perceive that they have a stake in the environment, fewer problems occur.
2. Children who come to see the classroom as "ours" are more likely to respect that environment.
3. Students who perceive the rules as "our" rules are more likely to follow them.
4. Children who begin to value their own worth, as well as respect the differences in others, are less likely to be disruptive.
5. Youngsters who begin to realize that they are an integral, functioning part of the environment are more likely to feel ownership of that environment and are less likely to abuse, destroy, or disrespect it.

Alternatives to Violence

"Our Classroom" also deals with problem-solving approaches to problems that do occur in spite of the preventative atmosphere. One method is to help students explore alternatives to their behavior. Just having choices available and assuming students will see them will not ensure that they will all find an extension activity after recess. "If a child is not aware of a choice, he has no choice," explain the authors. Look at responsibility as response-ability where it is the ability to respond.

"Children who see only one response to a certain situation have limited response-ability...they are immobilized by their limited awareness of choices."

To help alleviate this problem, a teacher needs to assist children in seeing meaningful alternatives to their behavior. An example was found in a classroom where there was a wall chart titled, "Instead of Fighting." Five alternatives were suggested:

- Talk it out—reason
- Take turns
- Get a referee
- Stay away from each other
- Pretend you're the other person

"The chart, produced by and for children, was created to help students visualize the choices. It helped them see that fighting was not the only alternative in certain situations," Moorman and Dishon explained. In addition to the class list, students role played a new behavior and it helped them gauge the possible outcomes of their choice. "The list and the role plays did not eliminate fighting, but they reduced both the intensity and the frequency." When the students used one of the alternatives to fighting, they shared their experiences orally with the class and feelings were explored and group cooperation was enhanced.

Another method to help children try out various re-

sponses to conflict situations is to let them practice with skits. The following skit technique from *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet* (New Society, 1987) shows how students can learn to think over and evaluate various possible solutions:

> First choose a conflict that is relevant to your class or group. This could include the following: a bully knocks the books out of another child's arms; children fight over a pencil and one accuses the other of stealing the pencil; two children are playing a game and a third child comes along and asks to play too, but the first child says, "no" because he doesn't like the child; or two children are playing checkers during free time and one goes to the teacher and accuses the other of cheating and making up new rules.
>
> Choose a conflict that is relevant to your class or group...and then ask what should the child or children do?
>
> Stopping the conflict skit before it is resolved often leads to the children suggesting many types of solutions. This is less likely if a solution is presented along with the skit. Younger children especially will imitate what they see in a skit, so be sure it is presented to them without a solution.
>
> After the skit is presented, break into small groups to discuss the conflict and possible solutions. You might have one person in each group act as a facilitator to ask the following questions:
>
> 1. What was the conflict?
> 2. What is one solution you can think of to that conflict?
> 3. Which of these solutions should we try to act out as a group?
> 4. Which role would you like to play in the solution?
>
> When the group has decided on the solution and the players, they should make the solution into a skit and rehearse it. When all the small groups are ready, return to the large group to put on the skits. After all of the skits have been presented, summarize the solutions and ask for discussion of them. With some groups, you may want to discuss how the participants were feeling during the skit.

Reprinted by permission from *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet*, by P. Prutzman, M.L. Burger, G. Bodenhamer and L. Stern. Copyright 1987 by New Society Publishers.

The authors also suggest making conflict video tapes which either use conflict skits already developed or present a new idea. "Again the object is for children to cooperate to create a final product which reflects everyone's input. Everyone should have a say in what conflicts and solutions will be included in the tape. Everyone should have a chance to help create the tape whether it is by taking the pictures or setting up the subject matter." Acting solutions to problems is a valuable learning process and is fun for children of all ages, including teachers.

Cooperative Activities for Young Children

Do you have students who reject others' ideas or would sooner grab an object rather than share it when working in a group? Just as children learn other new skills, they need to learn how to cooperate. This includes learning communication skills which help them find words to express their feelings.

To learn how to communicate effectively students need to aware of and practice skills such as learning to listen, getting the message across with and without words, solving problems and becoming assertive. An excellent resource that covers all of these areas for elementary teachers is *Games Children Should Play* (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1980). By participating in the activities suggested in this publication, children learn to recognize and accept anger as a legitimate feeling and then learn positive methods of expressing it. They also learn to take responsibility for their own feelings and actions through problem solving and cooperation.

"You shouldn't be afraid to label cooperative behavior when it occurs," Kreidler writes. "After all, we don't hesitate to tell a student that he or she did something 'all by yourself.' There are plenty of opportunities in classrooms to say, 'We did it together,' or, 'You did a good job cooperating.' Don't let these opportunities go by."[3]

For small groups, a cooperative activity like "Monster Making" is excellent. The children can decide together what the creation will be and each one gets a chance to help make it. The nice thing about monsters or outer space creatures is that they can have several heads and only one foot and look 'just right'. After finishing the monsters the children can discuss what they like about them or make up a story to go with the monsters they made.

Developing class projects such as working on wall charts or preparing a simple meal are good ways to encourage a feeling of community in the classroom.

Cooperative games provide another means of practicing cooperative skills. The group is challenged, they work together and everyone wins. Instead of hoping that others will be eliminated, as in a competitive game, the children can support each other.

In the excellent resource, *Creative Conflict Resolutions*, there are many good examples of cooperative games and activities including "Cooperative Musical Chairs." In this game the goal is for everyone to get a seat when the music stops. The difference, however, is that seats can be shared or laps utilized. If some participants fall off, the group starts again.

A challenging alternative to "Tug-of-War" is "Tug-of-Peace." A rope is laid out in a circle and the ends are tied together. The object of the game is for all the members of the group to raise themselves to a standing position by pulling on the rope. This game, along with such stand-bys as "Balloon Bounce," where the group keeps the balloon from falling to the ground, or "Mirroring Images" where children imitate each others' movements, focuses the students' attention on working with others rather than against them.

Friendship Built on Cooperation

"The rule of thumb for the neighborhood has been 'hit if you are hit,' no matter if it was an accident...Telling the

children to talk it out and helping them to do the same has been consistently less than successful. Children need more than chance opportunities to learn effective cooperation skills, more than praising good behaviors and punishing bad behaviors," said educator Dolores Schmitz of Milwaukee, WI.[6]

In order to develop cooperation and decrease the number of aggressive acts among the young children in her class, Schmitz implemented a program in which randomly picked pairs of students worked on manipulative tasks together. One of her cooperative classroom tasks for younger children was "Frosting Cupcakes." During this activity, child "A" received powdered sugar in a baggie, a spoon, 10 cinnamon red hots and a cupcake. Child "B" received milk in a small paper cup, a margarine bowl, four pecans and a cupcake. By combining the materials and sharing their equipment, they made the frosting, and frosted the cupcakes. Next, they put red hots and pecans in a "one for you, one for me" pattern until all were used. The partners then ate together and then chose a play activity together.

"Friendship is built on the cooperation of two persons," Schmitz said. "By teaching cooperative behaviors, the classroom becomes more fun, achievement is up and life outside school becomes happier, less aggressive."

Kreidler explains that cooperative and competitive activities may both have a place in the classroom—sparking interest and creating a timely change of pace. One creates independent interaction while the other builds interdependence with the group. Cooperative games are important, but they need not necessarily replace competitive games. "I look at cooperative games as a way of giving the other side—cooperation—equal time."[7]

Moral Development

Schools this year will come under increasing pressure to be surrogate parents, reports an issue management program of the Macomb Intermediate School District. The group, which taps national education leaders and researchers, has found this top educational issue will include parents' expectations for schools to teach "manners, morals, health, and other subjects traditionally the domain of family and church."[8]

Teachers do not teach in an atmosphere devoid of moral education. The somewhat "silent curriculum" includes such principles as honesty, fairness, kindness and respect for others. Teaching values, as such, however, is delicate work, according to Francis Roberts, superintendent of the Cold Spring Harbor Schools (N.Y.). "Recognizing the sensitivity of such teaching, some schools have tried to reduce controversy by using special 'value clarification' curricula, which help children sort out choices in increasingly complex value-laden issues."[9]

Knowledge Without Meaning

We have seen children arrive in the classroom who are schooled, but are not educated in the sense of being wise in their actions. Their test scores are good, yet their social development is nil. What causes this?

Selma Wasserman, Professor of Education at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia (Canada), believes children who live with TV and computer games as primary playmates are in grave danger of not having sufficient life experiences to grow into feeling humans.

In her article, "Growing Teachers: Is There Life After Pac-Man?", (*Childhood Education*, May/June 1985), Wasserman points to a study of IBM's "Write to Read Program" which has been field tested in over 10,000 classrooms.[10] In the program 5- and 6-year-old children learn to write before they learn to read, and read well they do. More than 95

percent of the children in the 1st grade program learned to write as well as read, with test scores higher in reading skills than 89 percent of their peers. "The implications of these data are mind-boggling," Wasserman notes. "And all of this is accomplished without the intervention of a human teacher."

If the future basic skill development is left to computer programs, what should schools do for children and what should teachers be doing as they exercise the professional functions of teaching?

Dr. Joseph Weizenbaum, Professor of Computer Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, believes caution is necessary and that computers are making us all value calculation more than human judgment. He points out that the use of computers may also serve to inhibit or cover up questioning that should take place. If a child is having trouble learning a skill, the use of a computer can allow a teacher to give the child practice, but not address the problem of why the child is not learning.[11]

Wasserman suggests "post PAC-Man classrooms" give primary emphasis to developing interpersonal skills and the nurturing of children into feeling people. "The accumulation of knowledge, without the development of expertise in using knowledge wisely, can be an immensely empty learning experience. It is not the amount of facts that we learn that will see us through life in the 21st century. It is how we will use that knowledge to make this planet a better, more decent place to live."[12]

Self-Esteem from Within

Self-esteem—what we think of ourselves and how much we care about ourselves—is important to personal growth. In the classroom teachers can help students with self-acceptance by creating an environment that is supportive and warm. Growth will occur if children know they can take the risk of change and possible mistakes—if there is an atmosphere of acceptance.[13]

Yet, have you ever found yourself relating to a child with low self-esteem by trying to "fix" things up for them or manipulating events so that they wouldn't have to face the pain? Jill Anderson, author of two cognitive self-esteem programs, ***Pumsy in Pursuit of Excellence*** and ***Thinking, Changing, Rearranging***, thinks that though this well-meaning effort may have short-term results, these efforts probably reinforce the belief that both good days and bad are somehow tied to the power of external events. "The child attributes the quality of his day to something outside himself; he remains blind to his role in creating his day, and thus is powerless to make changes in it. The belief is deeply entrenched in children that they 'have to' feel a certain way, 'because of' what happened."

Anderson's program, ***Thinking, Changing, Rearranging***, which help children ages 9 to 17 realize the self-esteem must ultimately come from within each person and that they have power over the quality of their own day. In the program the child is asked to take a good look at his own thinking, language and belief systems. "He is given not strokes, but skills—tools for examining his own thoughts and beliefs to find the source for his own emotional pain, and then the tools for removing whatever blocks may be standing between him and a sense of higher self-esteem."

One of the critical points in the program is the ability to distinguish a Fact from a Belief. "This is not difficult, even for children, but it is a skill which has a great impact on how we feel...Living as if Beliefs were Facts can be disillusioning—if not downright frustrating." Anderson has children look at irrational beliefs or ideas that can cause problems such as: "I must be good at everything." "It's your fault I feel this way." "I can't help being this way." Emotions tend to follow thoughts, Anderson points out. Negative thoughts and irrational thoughts can have the same effect as junk food: it can make you miserable. Signals to look for are demanding phrases such as "I can't make a mistake"; coping out statements such as "Everything would be fine if it

weren't for him"; overgeneralization such as "Everybody has a ten speed but me"; or catastrophizing such as "I'll just die if they find out I'm not going."

By helping students recognize the negative beliefs and helping them learn rational beliefs and rational self-talking methods, they gain power to control their inner emotional environment regardless of "what happens." This program is used in a variety of ways. Classroom teachers use it as part of "personal growth units," counselors use it with individuals and groups, and at Millard Public School District in Omaha (NE), the course is taught by all the teachers as part of a 15 minutes-a-day session on "life-skills."[14]

Affective Development Activities

One example of affective education which teaches responsibility, tolerance and sensitivity is *Learning to Care: Classroom Activities for Social and Affective Development* by Norma D. Feshbach et.al. (Scott, Foresman, and Co., 1983). It is concerned with an area of children's development that complements but is different from traditional academic education. It places emphasis on the development of social understanding or social cognition, as well as on the recognition and mastery of emotional experiences. As the authors explain:

> The development of these affective and cognitive skills should in turn lead to an enhancement of the child's social competence—his or her ability to get along in the world. It should also lead to the development of empathy—the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others. (p.2)

The research that this program was based on was an empathy training curriculum developed at the University of California at Los Angeles and included third and fourth grade children who met with a trainer for a one-hour session three times a week. "The children included very aggressive, moderately aggressive, and nonaggressive boys and girls from low- and middle-income groups. Among the ethnic groups represented were Anglos, Blacks, Spanish speaking

Americans, and Orientals." A variety of different measures of affect, cognition, self-appraisal and social behavior were administered before and after the training period, during the exercise, and in the classroom. "The children were randomly assigned to empathy-training groups, to problem-solving control activity groups, or to control groups that received the evaluation measures but did not participate in any training activities during the ten-week experimental training period," the authors explain. At the conclusion of the study the results showed, "Children in the empathy-training groups developed a better self-concept and displayed greater social understanding than children in either the problem-solving control group or the nonparticipating control group."

The authors point out, "One should not expect the empathy-training curriculum to work miracles, but the evaluation that was carried out indicates that empathy-training exercises can be a productive and valuable component of elementary school curricula."

Two examples of the activities included in *Learning to Care* are as follows:

Camera Walk

1. OBJECTIVES: To understand that space looks different from different locations. Specifically, to draw a picture of an object indicated nonverbally by another child.

2. RELATIONSHIP to the development of empathy: Assuming the perspective of another; observing and interpreting the expectations and choices of another.

3. MATERIALS: "Camera" bag or box with "lens hole" for children to wear, paper and various materials for drawing, various articles displayed for "photographing."

4. PROCEDURE: Have the group sit in a circle, eyes closed, listening to the sounds in the room.

After a minute or so, have the children discuss the sounds they heard. Again have the children close their eyes, and ask them to picture in their minds what they would see if they were looking directly ahead. Emphasize attending to details. You may ask the children to look again and then tell from memory what is around them. Next, have the children go on a "camera walk." The children should work together in pairs without talking. One child puts on the "camera" bag or box and pretends to be the "camera." The other child is the photographer. The photographer leads the "camera" around the room and squeezes the "camera's" hand when the photographer wants to take a picture. Encourage the children to take "photos" of the arrangements set up around the room for this purpose. After a picture has been taken, have the pairs come back to the circle, and have each child draw a picture of the scene "photographed," or of one that should have been "photographed." The children should then have a chance to compare their pictures and to discuss their memories of what the picture should have looked like—of what should have been "photographed." The children should go on a second camera walk, trading roles, and repeating the process.

5. SPECIAL HINTS: Suggest that the children avoid looking at their partner's drawing until the drawings are both finished. Suggest to the "camera" that he or she look carefully at what the photographer is looking at when the "camera" is "clicked." The perspective and angle of the drawings should be as accurate as possible, but artistic skill should not be compared.

Rufus

Rufus has a new ball that he just got for Christmas. He can't wait to go to the park and try it out. When he gets there, he sees his friend James, who is a little bit older than Rufus. Rufus decides to ask James if he wants to play ball with him, but before he asks him, James and a couple other big guys come over and take the ball away, saying, "Hey, now we've got a ball. Let's get a game up." At first Rufus is pleased, but then he realizes what is going to happen. James says, "No, you can't play. You're too little, and we've got enough *big* guys to play." Rufus is furious and starts yelling at James. James pushes Rufus off the court and tells him to leave them alone.

Rufus is really angry, but the other guys are bigger than he is, and he knows there is nothing he can do. Just then, Rufus' friend Andy comes by and thinks to himself, "That baby Rufus never wants to play. Look at him just moping by the side of the court." Andy calls out, "Hey Rufus, you turkey, how come you never want to play? What are you doin', just sittin' here? You always hang around, but you never want to get in a game."

1. **OBJECTIVES:** To understand that there may be more than one perspective in a given situation, depending on the knowledge of the various characters involved. Specifically, to listen to and discuss a story in which the characters hold two different perspectives.
2. **RELATIONSHIP** to the development of empathy: Assuming the perspectives of another.
3. **MATERIALS:** "Rufus" story.
4. **PROCEDURE:** Read "Rufus." Then lead a discussion focusing on the reasons for Andy's behavior and his comments to Rufus. Encourage the children to suggest and role play different endings to the vignette. Ask them to think of experiences of their own that are similar to those of Rufus.
5. **SPECIAL HINTS:** In this activity the children, as audience, are privy to more information than any character in the story. Individuals rarely have access to such knowledge, but one can often infer much

from others' behaviors. Encourage the children to think of times when they knew more than they were told and could understand another's perspective by thinking about what the other person knew.

"Camera Walk" and "Rufus" are reprinted from *Learning to Care* by Norma Deitch Feshback, et. al. Copyright 1983 by Scott, Foresman and Company. Reprinted by permission.

Knowledge of Others Promotes Understanding

As pointed out in Chapter 14 "Who's Values Will Children Accept?", research has shown many children's toys and television programs tend to promote negative stereotypes and disrespect for others who appear different. With these negative pressures on children, it becomes relevant for teachers to place a high priority on dispelling misconceptions and promote understanding of other cultures and individuals with special needs.

Multicultural Education

A great deal has been written on cultural education and the development of self-esteem. Yet, how do teachers utilize this information to best promote multicultural concepts in the classroom?

The first step is for teachers to become aware of their own personal feelings about various cultures and their personal prejudices. Once this occurs, they can choose areas in which they will feel comfortable in teaching and thus become a positive model for cultural awareness—encouraging open communication in the classroom.

It has been found through experience that a common mistake made by teachers is planning a unit on the Mexican culture or on Indians and spending a week or two glorifying the culture with special projects, bulletin boards, books and filmstrips. This leads to an overemphasis on exotic differences rather than the stress placed on seeing similarities in people.[15] Laverene Warner, associate professor of teacher education at Sam Houston State University, points out, "Of

course, these units have merit, but the indirect message to children is that culture is like Christmas—it comes once a year and the remainder of the year is rather humdrum in comparison."[16]

Introducing multicultural concepts into daily classroom practice is a method to ensure culture is encompassed. There are many educational and book stores that carry multicultural materials. One specialty shop I can recommend is *Claudia's Caravan* in Alameda, CA. The owner, Claudia Schwalm, a former teacher, created the store so that educators would have a wide selection of multicultural materials from which to choose.

Heidi Davis, an educational consultant in Kent, Washington, has found the main goal for any multicultural activity is its being age-appropriate for the group. Where can you locate multicultural materials to incorporate into your classroom? Ethnic shops are a gold mine. Not only can you purchase a unique supply of foodstuffs, but they often stock kitchen utensils unique to that culture, as well as books, toys and calendars. Obtaining copies of Chinese or Jewish books to place on your library shelf is an excellent way to help children become comfortable with other cultural customs. In addition, the shopkeepers are often interested in what you are doing and may be willing to come and speak with the class.

"Also, services which help minorities are found in many cities," Davis notes. "Their staff can assist you in learning more about a particular culture and where to obtain resources for your classroom."

Parents can be a valuable resource to teachers by furnishing information and suggestions for multicultural activities that can be used throughout the year. A valuable program is *Alerta* by Leslie Williams and Yvonne De Gaetano (Addison-Wesley, 1985) which is a multicultural, bilingual approach to teaching young children and encourages teachers to form partnerships with parents and members of the community.

"Every child is a cultural child, experienced in a way of life," contends Asa Hillard III, Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University in Atlanta. "By the time young children arrive at school, which is a new cultural environment in itself, they have diverse cultural experiences and social skills. It is here at school, that teachers need to make bonds with the children by responding to their social diversity and development."

"Teachers also need to recognize these experiences and skills and use them to enhance their teaching environment—creating a curricula that will offer diversity," Hillard notes. "This means responding to children's interests and needs on a daily basis, not always using standard lesson plans."[17]

By incorporating cultural diversity, which is dynamic, teachers have an opportunity to be more creative and the children will reap the benefits. What are the benefits?

"Culture brings order to chaos, gives a sense of belonging and fulfillment," Hillard said. Our requirements as educators are to create new bonds—to be culturally salient and sensitive. We can create this salient environment if we promise: 1) we will use the experiences our children already have to develop the curriculum; 2) we will organize a principle of dialogue instead of monologue in the classroom; and 3) to use the educational system, the parents and the wider community to seek support and learn new ways to operate the classroom.

"We can facilitate the socialization process by calling on what we know about culture," Hillard confirms. "We either use culture or use it to stigmatize."[18]

Accepting Individual Differences

Schools can also help children recognize and value people with special needs and handicaps. As Francis Roberts points out in his article, "Should Schools Teach Moral Values" (*Parents*, August 1986), "The baseline of moral and ethical values is an ability to *behave* in accord with moral principles. School is a great testing ground for such be-

havior." How well moral education takes place throughout the school and "those yellow classrooms on wheels," can be judged in part by how the children treat each other.

I recently observed an example of this accepting and supportive attitude in a neighboring school. It was lunch time and the cafeteria was filled with children of all ages finishing their meal. The general clamor of conversation was suddenly interrupted by a crash as a boy about 8-years-old dropped his tray on the floor. There were a few giggles, but there were also three sets of hands quickly on the spot to help pick up the mess for the boy.

I asked the girl beside me what she thought of the situation. "Oh, it's okay if you drop a tray by accident. Davey has cerebal palsy and sometimes he has some trouble carrying things. We know he didn't mean to. Some of us just go help him pick it up and then we all go out to play." This was a supportive statement for mainstreaming children and for the value of moral development.

According to Shelly Heekin, of the Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project at North Carolina, young children react differently to new situations. Some children will accept a disabled child without hesitation while the reaction of others will be mixed. At this stage the teacher should plan to discuss the handicap of the new student as well as other characteristics that make people different. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that we are all basically the same, yet special in our own way.

For those young children who do not come in daily contact with others that have individual differences or those teachers wanting to extend their curriculum, there are dolls created to bring into the classroom and initiate discussions. Heekin has found that disabled students were not the only persons affected by mainstreaming. It is important for children to be comfortable with people who have disabilities and dispel common myths and stereotypes. She has developed a program, *New Friends* which is centered on teacher or parent-made dolls which have a specific disability

(including blindness, deafness, hard of hearing, cerebral palsy, learning disability and emotional problems.) The "New Friends" allow the children to satisfy their curiosity and to play out fears associated with handicapped conditions. "Boys and girls are encouraged to express their honest feelings when they meet new friends," Ms. Heekin explains. "In the end, they learn that it's all right to be different."

Lost Childhood

Neil Postman, author of *The Disappearance of Childhood* (Dell, 1984), and *Teaching is a Conserving Activity* (Delacorte, 1979) thinks schools, in addition to parents, should constantly provide children with what the rest of the culture is not providing them. This includes the importance of history, continuity, tradition, culture and an emphasis on language. He points out that people's values, attitudes, and traditions preface all that make up humanity.[19]

In his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, (Viking Penguin, 1985), Postman notes, television's principal contribution to educational philosophy is the idea that teaching and entertainment are inseparable. There are three commandments that form the philosophy of the education which television offers. 1) "Thou shalt have no prerequisites." Every program must be a complete package so that no previous knowledge is required by the viewer. Thus by doing away with sequence and continuity in education, "television undermines the idea that sequence and continuity have anything to do with thought itself." 2) "Thou shalt induce no perplexity." "A perplexed learner is a learner who will turn to another station." TV strives to make information or a story accessible, "since the contentment, not the growth, of the learner is paramount." 3) "Thou shalt avoid exposition like the ten plagues visited upon Egypt." Arguments, hypotheses, discussions, reasons or any traditional instruments of reasoned discourse turn television into third-rate printed matter. "Thus, television teaching takes the form of

story-telling, conducted through dynamic images and supported by music." This, notes Postman, is characteristic of *Different Strokes*, *Sesame Street* and *Nova*.[20]

> The name we may properly give to an education without prerequisites, perplexity and exposition is entertainment. And when one considers that save for sleeping there is no activity that occupies more of an American youth's time than television-viewing, we cannot avoid the conclusion that a massive reorientation toward learning is now taking place.(p.148)

Postman summarizes his thoughts on childhood by explaining the preservation or restoration of childhood offers no simple solution or patented potions. "Perhaps our inspiration can come from the Chinese, who have one symbol to represent both danger and opportunity. As professionals and parents who see the dangers inherent in a loss of childhood, we can take this opportunity to start an international preservation movement."[21]

"What we understand now is that a community wishing to teach its children to value life must itself value the life of each of them."

Warner Bloomburg Jr.

Chapter 16

Community Action

Community action groups can take an active role in television reform. This involvement was validated by a court case in 1964 in which the FCC was required to acknowledge that citizen groups were "parties in interest" and could be allowed in license renewal proceedings and other means of television reform.[1] Today, in addition to writing letters to local stations, community groups can write letters to and participate in FCC rule-making procedures.

Tips for Taking Action

In an excellent resource book, *Changing Channels*, authors Peggy Charren and Martin W. Sandler give the following suggestions to community groups with the desire to become an "interested party":

1) Don't act alone; rather form a coalition with other groups in the community and with national organizations. You can learn from their experience and advice and gain much more attention for your cause.
2) Use the press—write articles for newspapers, magazines and journals. Learn to write and use press releases. "Nothing will gain attention of a broadcaster more quickly than adverse publicity."
3) Research your subject thoroughly and have facts and

figures to back up your arguments.
4) Work toward bringing alternative messages to TV with public service announcements such as listing inexpensive ways for families to spend time together, or how to spend money wisely.
5) Monitor your local stations' performance record and check for discrepancies in the station's promises to the FCC versus its performance. (According to the FCC rules, the stations' claims of performance are available to public inspection.) Questions to ask: Is the station airing local programs that speak to the interests of the community it is licensed to serve? Are minority groups visible and are their particular concerns and needs addressed?
6) Use Public Service Announcements (PSA) as a means to carry your message to thousands of viewers. Before 1984, television stations were required by the FCC to provide free on-air time to nonprofit organizations offering a service or an announcement which served community interest. With the deregulation of commercial media, this time was affected. Yet today most stations still commit a portion of their air time to PSAs. However, there are some set backs to interested non-profit organizations which include high cost and the fact that the station can decide what PSAs they want to use.

Community groups or PTAs interested in sharing their findings on television viewing or violent toys can become their own press agents by contacting local television and radio newcasters, talk show hosts, and editorial directors to inform them of a story of local or regional interest.

For more information on managing the media, group representatives should contact the local college or university or enlist free help from on-air talent in the community. Three resources for community groups are listed in the Appendices.

For groups interested in being a part of an organized poll in which the results are printed and sent to the FCC,

broadcasters, sponsors, and congressional committees, there is the *Look-Listen Opinion Poll*. This poll, created by the National Telemedia Council, was designed to develop an informed viewing public. Follow-up activities to the poll include sharing the results with local press and/or broadcast stations, promoting your organization by having an "open to the public" meeting focusing on critical evaluation skills and sharing the results of the project. (See Appendices.)

Opportunities Using Cable TV

According to Charren and Sandler, "Of all the ways in which you can play a direct role in making television better for yourself and your children, none is more important than getting involved in the cabling process in your city or town."[2] Cable networks have the potential of allowing organizations to use television and they are generally receptive to citizen participation because "people are more likely to buy services for which they themselves have expressed a need."

If your community is in the process of selecting a cable company, don't take it for granted that your local officials are knowledgeable about television in general and the potential of cable TV, warn Charren and Sandler. You need to remember that "you are establishing a system that your community will have to live with for a good many years. Be careful and be demanding." Cable can be much more than a mere provider of additional entertainment channels.

Action Against Violent Toys

The International War Toys Boycott Campaign works to increase public awareness of war toys and cartoons. It is concerned with toys that have violent themes being promoted to children and adolescents. Here are some things the campaign supporters suggest community groups can do to help:[3]

- Write your local TV stations that carry violent cartoons and ads for violent toys and protest this promotion of violence.

- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper, church, school or health magazine that you subscribe to and state your views on violent toys.
- Encourage friends and relatives to refrain from buying toys with the violent themes. Teach the children that war is not a game and that we should not have fun pretending to kill and conquer. Instead buy non-violent toys and make it a rule that violence is never to be used as a means of entertainment by anyone.
- Write or arrange a meeting with your local toy stores and ask them not to carry war toys. Reproduce materials from the "Stop the War Toys" packet and distribute them outside to customers, or to schools, churches, day care centers, etc.
- Write your representative at the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington D.C. 20515 and your Senators at the U.S. Senate, Washington D.C. 20510.
- Write to the FCC, 1919 M. St., NW, Washington D.C. 20554 and voice your opinion on the use of children's programming to sell violence to children.

See Appendices for guidelines to submitting formal comments to elected representatives and the FCC.

Providing Alternatives for Children

Another avenue for concerned citizens is supporting the school's arts council which introduces children to local or visiting artists. These programs also allow children to participate in creative activities during school time. David Elkind, educator and child psychologist, believes schools need to recognize that children work better, learn better and grow better if learning the basics is alternated with a time to explore self-expression. "Far from being a luxury, time and money spent on the arts enhance learning and development by reducing the stress of hurrying and by giving children an aesthetic perspective to balance the workday one."[4]

Also, check with your public library to see what it is doing to promote its valuable resources to the public. In his book, *The*

Read-Aloud Book, Trelease has a section which addresses the task of libraries' becoming more competitive with television. For example, what better way to introduce children and their parents to the benefits of a library than by having library registration tables at preschool and elementary schools during the first week of school to distribute library information and register parents and children for cards.

Other options for concerned citizens are supporting cultural community activities and intergenerational programs as well as school-age programs. In Lexington, Massachusetts, a citizens group helped start a community-run transportation system that accommodated for children's needs including transporting them to out-of-school activities such as private lessons, trips to the library or community recreational centers.[5]

Parents, teachers and concerned community members can take a positive role in educating the public about critical television viewing, the effects of violent toys, and ways to help children find alternatives to television. It basically takes one or two people who are unhappy with the present situation and who are willing to put time and effort into leading a group to support the rights of children.

The Choice is Ours

Violent entertainment is being pushed to its technological limits and is directly interacting with young viewers through their toys. How our children perceive the world and how they respond to conflict depends on us. Childhood is short and irreplaceable. Let us not relinquish this time to the unconcerned and insensitive but rather use it to nurture a joy for discovery and knowledge and empathy for others. For in childhood is the essence of humankind.

Appendices

Critical Viewing

Publications

Amusing Ourselves to Death
By Neil Postman
Viking-Penguin, 1985

In this powerful book, Postman describes how television has conditioned us to tolerate visually entertaining material to the detriment of our children, education and public discourse. He gives suggestions on how to withstand the media onslaught. (Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10010)

The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV
By Stan and Jan Berenstain
Random House, 1984.

This is an enjoyable and informative book for young children that describes bad eating habits and lack of exercise correlated with TV viewing. The story concludes with a critical viewing family able to find creative options to television. (Random House, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022.)

Breaking the TV Habit
By Joan Anderson Wilkins
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982.

Wilkins gives an interesting account of how families contend with television and ways in which they "break the habit." She suggests parents look for danger signals of too much television viewing and offers a tested program that will help families gain control of the television in their lives. (Charles Scribner's Sons, 115 5th Ave., New York, NY 10003.)

Changing Channels
By Peggy Charren and Martin Sandler
Addison-Wesley, 1983.

This is a fascinating and informative book that covers television's impact on the broadcasting industry and home technology. It discusses people's over-use of television, ways to deal with critical viewing as well as television's role in education. It also includes practical examples of how people can become active in their community to help bring changes to television broadcasting. (Addison-Wesley, Jacob Way, Reading, MA 01867.)

Children and Media
By Don Kaplan
Instructor Books, 1986.

An excellent resource for families and teachers, this book offers a wealth of constructive and entertaining activities to change kids from passive receivers of the media into active, knowledgeable participants. It contains 179 workbook page activities designed to be reproduced. (Instructor Books, Inc., 545 Fifth Ave., N.Y., NY 10017.)

Children and Television...a primer for parents
By John Murray and Barbara Lonnborg
Boys Town.

This 12-page booklet helps parents understand the positive and negative roles that television takes in a young child's development. It suggests steps parents can take to manage their children's viewing time and express their likes and dislikes to producers and broadcasters. To obtain a free copy, send request to: Communications & Publication Service Division, Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, Boys Town, Nebraska 68010.

Classroom Curriculum Materials for Teaching Critical TV Viewing
By Carolyn Shadle
Interpersonal Communication Services, 1987.

A listing of available materials for teaching critical viewing skills to students kindergarten through adults, this resource supplies overview, content, resources and ordering information for materials listed. (ICS, Inc., 7052 West Lane, Eden, NY 14057.)

Critical Television Viewing: A Language Skills Work-A-Text
by WNET-13 in New York
Under contract with Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The curriculum covers a variety of topics including the following: examines different types of media and the ways in which students use them; looks at the various structural aspects of television programs and how they vary; brings attention to the persuasion techniques used on television; analyzes the elements of TV news; teaches about programming decisions, and helps develop skills in analyzing programs, making reviews and making good use of television viewing time. Teacher and student workbooks available. (Globe Book Company, Inc., 50 W. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010.)

Critical Viewing for Television: A Book for Parents and Teachers
By Ibrahim Hefzallah
University Press of America, 1987.

A comprehensive, yet easy-to-read treatment of adults' critical viewing of television, this book explores persuasion and presentation techniques as well as the potential effects on the viewer of violence, sex and commercials. (University Press of America, Inc., 4720 Boston Way, Laham, MD 20706.)

The Day Our TV Broke Down
By Betty Ren Wright
Raintree Children's Books, 1980.

This book points out both children and adults need to be reminded there is more magic inside themselves than inside the TV set. The story tells of a boy's weekly visit to see his father on Saturday where both are more committed to their TV programs than they are to activities together. Once the TV breaks down, they learn that Saturdays can still be good days—even when TV cartoons are missing. (Raintree Books, 310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53203.)

Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television
By Jerry Mander
Quill, 1978.

In this thought-provoking book, Mander describes how TV can assault a child's developing sense of imagery and imaginative play. He also suggests advertising's goal is to foster discontent in viewers and concludes that TV should not be upgraded or parent-controlled but rather eliminated. (Quill, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.)

Getting the Most Out of Television
By Dorothy and Jerome Singer
Scott, Foresman, 1981.

As teacher resource book, this publication presents instructional units on television programming, special effects, characters, action and aggression, how television works and the influence of television. (Scott, Foresman, and Company, Inc., 1900 East Lake Ave., Glenview, IL, 60025.)

Look and Listen Poll
By National Telemedia Council.

This national poll allows students to become actively involved in critical viewing by communicating directly with broadcaster or advertiser of programs chosen to be evaluated. The results of the poll can be utilized in the classroom curriculum. (National Telemedia Council, 120 East Wilson St., Madison, WI 53703.)

The Plug-In Drug
By Marie Winn
Viking-Penguin, 1985.

This revised edition of Winn's original book of the same title, is a classic study of television's impact on children. It includes material on video games and computers as well as a chapter on television and the school. Winn focuses on the question: How does the passive act of watching television affect the developing child's relationship to the real world? (Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10010)

Teaching Television
By Dorothy and Jerome Singer and Diana Zuckerman
Dial Press, 1981.

This is an extensive work dealing with critical viewing and how to use TV to your child's advantage. There are discussion ideas and activities included which make it a practical resource. (Available from Family Television Research Center, 405 Temple St., New Haven, CT 06511.)

The TV-Smart Book for Kids
By Peggy Charren and Carol Hulsizer
E.P. Dutton, 1986.

A user manual for children—it is a calendar to plan TV watching. It contains puzzles, games, activities and a special parent guide which makes critical viewing an enjoyable family activity. (E.P. Dutton, 2 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016.)

Organizations

Action for Children's Television (ACT)
20 University Road
Cambridge, MA 02138

ACT is a citizen action group that works to improve children's television programming and eliminate commercial abuses. It initiates legal reform and promotes public awareness of issues relating to children's programming.

Children's Advertising Review Unit
National Advertising Division,
Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc.
845 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Reviews and evaluates advertising directed to children under twelve years of age.

Media Action Research Center, Inc. (MARC)
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1370
New York, NY 10115

An independently incorporated, non-profit organization, MARC is involved with the following: studies the impact of TV on viewers through scientific research; makes information available on the influence of media and new technology especially on families and individuals; helps consumers develop strategies for more intentional selective and questioning approaches to television and other media through workshops and educational events; and helps bring about positive changes in the television system. *Media and Values*, a quarterly interfaith media magazine is published in correlation with MARC ($14/year). For more information write: *Media & Values*, 1962 S. Shenandoah, Los Angeles, CA 90034.

National Association for Better Broadcasting (NABB)
7918 Naylor Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90045

NABB is a national consumer group concerned with promoting the public interest in broadcasting. It works to develop public awareness of rights and responsibilities in broadcasting.

National Coalition on Television Violence
P.O. Box 2157
Champaign, IL 61820

The Coalition has a newsletter available which reports on their findings of research, polls and legislation dealing with violence on children's programming.($25/yr)

National Telemedia Council, Inc. (NTC)
120 East Wilson St.
Madison, WI 53703

The goal of the Council is to work toward a "Media Wise Society" in which consumers make educated and intelligent use of the electronic media and in which broadcasters strive toward excellence in programming. They work for consumers through various programs including the *Look-Listen Opinion Poll*, an annual evaluation of network programs which is printed and reaches sponsors, broadcasters, congressional committees, and the FCC. *Telemedium*, a bi-monthly newsletter, features suggested reading lists, trends in media and articles of special interest ($10/yr). NTC also has a Media Literacy Project which includes resource materials and a media literacy library.

Television Information Office (TIO)
745 5th Ave.
New York, NY 10022

This information office provides information in the form of pamphlets, speeches and paperbacks. It has a source of over 5,000 volumes and information-retrieval equipment.

However, it is worth noting the TIO is supported by the three major television networks, individual commercial stations, the NAB and other station representatives. It's purpose is to "increase knowledge and understanding of the medium among individuals and groups who have a direct interest in its impact upon our society." This knowledge includes the following pamphlets (and premises): *The Mass Media: Their Impact on Children and Family Life* by Otto Klineberg M.D. and Joseph Klapper who summarize with, "I think it has been pretty well demonstrated that the mass media do not serve as the primary determinant or even as a very important determinant of any of the basic attitudes or the basic behavior patterns of either children or adults" (p.48f). In *Television Viewing and Its Effects—If Any—on Children* by Ner Littner, M.D., Littner summarizes the text with, "Television is our latest scapegoat for helping us avoid facing the unpleasant fact that we, as parents, are the ones entirely responsible for our children's being violent, or being passive, or eating a lot of highly-sugared cereals" (p.20).

Alternatives to Television

Publications

The Animation Book
By Kit Laybourne
Crown Publishing Group, 1979.

A comprehensive book on animation, this is a valuable resource for families with adults who have time to read the text. Excellent activities and methods are described for both beginner and advanced animators. (Crown Publishing, 225 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.)

Books for Every Child
American Library Association.

An annotated book list, "Books for Every Child," names the top 50 picture books and top 50 fiction books over the last 30 years. It is available for 25¢ and #10 SASE. Send request and remittance attention to: ALA Booklist—"Books for Every Child," ALA, 50 East Huron, Chicago, IL 60611.

Children's Choices
International Reading Association.

A list of children's top choices of books, "Children's Choices" is available on request with a self-addressed 44¢-stamped envelope (7⅞X10⅛). Send request and remittance to: International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale, Rd., P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714.

Cricket
By Marianne Carus, Ed.
Carus Corporation.

This high-quality magazine for children has been referred to as "the *New Yorker* of children's literature." Each month in addition to the featured stories, there is the "Cricket League"—a contest section for children's stories, poems and drawings. Prizewinning entries are published in two categories, 5-9 year-olds and 10-14 year-olds. Subscription $22.50/yr (12 issues). (Cricket, P.O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354.)

Family Creative Workshop
By Steven Schepp, Ed.
Plenary Publications, 1976.

A valuable encyclopedia of traditional and contemporary crafts, it shares with readers the craft skills that can enrich our lives. It contains practical and illustrated teaching material and shares the knowledge and comments of skilled people who describe their work in ways that make it easy for others to follow in their footsteps. This set of books is out of print, however they are available at many libraries.

401 Ways to Get Your Kids to Work at Home
By Bonnie Runyan McCullough
St. Martin's Press, 1981.

This practical book shares principles, strategies and tips on how to help children succeed in home assignments. The 245-page book also helps parents identify home living skills and lists the earliest age to introduce each skill and the age at which you can expect mastery. (St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010.)

Freed's Guide to Student Competitions and Publishing
By Judith Freed
Freed, 1987.

As a new edition, this guide contains more than 70 national contests for students in grades K-12. The listings are for articles, poems and artwork. For more information write to: Judith Freed, 218 W. Fountain Ave., Delaware, OH 43015.

Gifted Children Monthly
By James Alvino, Publisher
Gifted and Talented Publications.

This informative 24-page newsletter describes activities and programs of interest to gifted children and their parents. It presents ideas that inspire any parents to help their children (gifted in their own special way) to expand their awareness and perception of the world. Subscription $25/yr. (11 issues). (Gifted Children Monthly, P.O. Box 10149, Des Moines, IA 50340.)

Imagine That—Exploring Make Believe
By Joyce Strauss
Human Science Press, 1984.

This "whimsical journey into the realm of imagination" allows children to explore a world where flowers speak and and hands change into magic wands. Open-ended questions stimulate children and help them to formulate ideas. (Human Science Press, 72 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10011.)

Make Believe: Games and Activities to Foster Imaginative Play in Young Children
By Dorothy and Jerome Singer
Scott Foresman, 1985.

A practical and informative book for parents and teachers of preschool children, *Make Believe*, supplies a range of exercises and games designed to help preschool children expand their imaginative horizons and enjoy their play more. The Singers also suggest ways in which adults can play more effectively with children and foster independent development of children's imaginative resources. (Scott, Foresman and Co., 1900 East Lake Ave., Glenview, IL 60025.)

Mind Over Media
by Barbara Lee and Masha K. Rudman
Seaview Books, 1982.

This book is for parents whose elementary-school children have mastered the art of reading and writing but resist efforts to help them improve vital skills. The authors supply hundreds of innovative ways for concerned parents to help their children improve their language skills by using movies, plays, television, newspapers and magazines as sources of stimulation. (This book is out of print but is available at many libraries.)

Mommy, It's a Renoir!
By Aline Wolf
Parent Child Press, 1984.

An exciting art appreciation program for young children, it is based on postcard art reproductions. This set of practical books emphasizes exposing young children to art reproductions rather than filling them with the facts of art history. (Parent Child Press, P.O. Box 767, Altoona, PA 16603.)

Once Upon A Mind
By Charles Smith
KSU, Cooperative Extension Service.

A parent program developed by Charles Smith, Extension Specialist at Kansas State University, it includes a newsletter that provides parents and caretakers with information about child development, strengthening parent-child relationships, and helping children learn personal and social skills. The newsletters are available and contain short reviews of books geared toward 3- to 8-year-old children and activities for incorporating the books' concepts. *Once Upon a Mind Quarterly* is an excellent resource for parents and teachers. Each year's volume is available for $2 and the subject content is as follows: 1983 Quarterlies (Sibling Relationships, Courage/Fear, Sharing/Giving, and Sex Education); 1984 Quarterlies (Divorce/Separation, Anger, Sadness/Loneliness, Conflict/Violence); 1985 Quarterlies (Imagination/Fantasy, Compassion/Love, Communication/Honesty, Death/Life). To order, send request and remittance to: Once Upon a Mind, 343 Justin Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas 66506.

Parents' Choice
Diana Huss Green, Ed.
Parents' Choice Foundation.

Parents' Choice is a useful parent guide which reviews children's media—books, television, movies, home videos, recordings, toys, games, computer programs and rock'n'roll. It is available for $15/yr (4 issues). A free booklet, *What Kids Who Don't Like to Read Like to Read*, is available which covers the reading interests of children in kindergarten through junior high. Send request with SASE to: Parents' Choice, P.O. Box 185, Waban, MA 02168.

The Read-Aloud Handbook
By Jim Trelease
Viking-Penguin, 1985.

This handbook is a valuable resource for parents and teachers of children of all ages. In addition to an extensive list of books for children, Trelease explains how reading aloud awakens children's imaginations, improves their language skills and opens new worlds of enjoyment. Readers can learn the benefits of this mutually rewarding experience.

(Viking-Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10010.)

School's Out—Now What?
By Joan Bergstrom
Ten Speed Press, 1984.

This useful and thought-provoking book presents ways for parents and other adults to provide practical help and guidance to children. It brings together resources, checklists, and hundreds of ideas that will help busy parents and their school-age children. (Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707.)

Talking With Families About Creativity
By Fred Rogers
Family Communications.

In this booklet, Fred Rogers explores the roots of creativity and the importance of creative play. Of interest to many parents is Rogers' discussion on responding to children's creativity and ways to encourage a child to discover his uniqueness. A free copy is available by sending request and SASE to: Family Communications, Inc., Marketing Department, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburg, PA 15213.

A Booklist of Children's Favorites (grade level)

Communication

Babe, the Gallant Pig, by Dick King-Smith (3-5)
Crow Boy by Taro Yashimo (K-4)
Frog and Toad are Friends by Arnold Lobel (PreS-2)
Michael by Lisel Moak Skorpen (1-3)
Now One Foot, Now the Other by Thomas DePaola (PreS-3)
Seven Kisses in a Row, by Patricia MacLachlan (2-4)
Sarah, Plain and Tall by Patricia MacLachlan (3-6)
Thinking Big by Susan Kurlin (2-6)

Stress/Anger

Alexander and the terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day by Judith Viorst (PreS-4)
First Grade Takes a Test by Miriam Cohen (K-3)
I'm Mad at You (poetry) by William Cole (3-5)
I and Sproggy by Constance C. Greene (4-6)
I Never Win by Judy Delton (K-2)
I'll Fix Anthony by Judith Viorst (PreS-2)
Jill the Pill by Julie Castiglia (1-2)
Much Bigger than Martin by Steven Kellog (K-4)

The One-eyed Cat by Paula Fox (4-7)
The Pain and the Great One by Judy Blume (K-5)
Secrets of a Small Brother by Richard Margoli (3-4)
Sixth grade can really kill you by Barthe de Clements (4-6)
The Trouble with Leslie by Ellen Matthew (2-3)

Conflict Resolution

The Buffalo Nickel Blues Band by Judie Angell (5-6)
Fighting, No Biting! by Else H. Minarik (PreS-2)
Island of the Skog by Steven Kellogg (K-5)
Mean Chickens and Wild Cucumbers by Nathan Zimmelman (3-4)
Move Over, Twerp by Martha Alexander (K-1)
My Mom Got a Job by Lucia B. Smith (K-2)
Potatoes, Potatoes by Anita Lobel (PreS-3)
The Quarreling Book by Charlotte Zolotow (PreS-3)
The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf (PreS-3)
Switcharound by Lois Lowry (4-6)
Thirteen Ways to Sink a Sub by Jamie Gilson (4-6)
The War with Grandpa by Robert Kimmel (4-6)

Compassion

The Bravest Babysitter by Barbara Greenberg (K-2)
Friends by Helme Heine (PreS-2)
The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein (K-4)
Leo the Late Bloomer by Robert Kraus (PreS-2)
Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney (PreS-4)
Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade by Barthe de Clements (3-6)
Obadiah, The Bold by Brinton Turkle (1-3)
The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett (3-6)
The Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth Speare (5-6)
Two Good Frie[illegible] by Judy Delton (PreS-2)
The Two of Them by Aliki (1-3)

Individual Differences

The Cay by Theodore Taylor (4-6)
Iggie's House by Judy Blume (4-6)
In the year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson by Betty Bao Lord (4-6)
Jaffa by Hugh Lewin (K-3)
The Rabbi's Girls by Johanna Hurwitz (5-6)
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor (5 and up)
Thank you, Jackie Robinson by Barbara Cohen (4-6)
Tobias Goes Seal Hunting by Ole Hertz (PreS-2)

Creative

Alphabatics by Suse Macdonald (PreS-5)
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs by Judi Barrett (PreS-5)
Fables by Arnold Lobel (PreS-5)
Frederick by Leo Lionni (PreS-3)
How Much is a Million? by David Schwartz (PreS-5)
James and the Giant Peach by Ronald Dahl (1-6)
On Beyond Zebra by Dr. Suess (PreS-4)
The Old Banjo by Dennis Haseley (3-4)
Sylvester and the Magic Pebble by William Steig (PreS-4)
Topsy Turvies by Mitsumasa Anno (PreS-6)
Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein (K-6)
The Wingdingdilly by Bill Peet (PreS-5)
The Wreck of the Zephyr by Chris VanAllsburg (K-6)

Resources and Organizations

Animal Town Game Co.
P.O. Box 2002
Santa Barbara, CA 93120

Although games have been played cooperatively in many cultures for centuries, very few of the games played today are designed so that all players strive toward one common, mutually desirable goal. The owners of Animal Town Game Company now offer a wide selection of cooperative and non-competitive board games where the element of "advantage" and "fear of being eliminated" is removed. They also carry learning toys such as "Blocks and Marbles," a fascinating working game of hardwood blocks, chutes and slides which allow children and adults to create fascinating block structures that guide marbles through an endless variety of mazes. Creative and thought-provoking books and audio tapes are also available. Catalog available on request.

Birch Tree Group Ltd.
180 Alexander St.
Princeton, NJ 08540

Looking for background music for a video or radio production? Birch Tree has an extensive selection of records in their Folkway/ Smithsonian Division including such titles as *City Sounds*, *Man in Space*, *Sounds of the Sea* and *Background for Home Videos*. Catalog available on request.

Creative Art Activities, Inc.
1600 E. 23rd St.
Cleveland, OH 44114

For parents who want a helping hand, there is a line of craft and activity kits, "Creativity for Kids," that encourage kids to express their natural creativity. The wide variety of kits include materials such as fabric, wood, puppets and jewelry which allow for open-ended and constructive play. There is also a *Let's Pretend* series which supplies paraphernalia for playing office, restaurant, store and theater. There is also a product guide which recommends age categories for products. These kits have received the "Parents Choice Awards" for excellence. Catalog available on request for $1.

Music for Little People
Box 1460
Redway, CA 95560

This company supplies quality tapes and musical instruments with subject matter that is educational, respectful of life and able to inspire the delicate magic of a child's imagination. The wide selection includes ***Tracking the Wily Wooley Cat*** by Dennis Hysom and ***Abiyoyo*** by Pete Seeger as well as the musical tale of ***Peter and the Wolf*** and the adventure story ***Ride Through the Solar System*** which includes lively songs filled with facts about the planets. A musical treat for the family is ***Kazaoo Along***. The package of four kazoos with a tape inspires all participants to hum dynamic sounds. Catalog available on request.

National Public Radio
Publishing Department
2025 M St. NW
Washington DC 20036

Audio cassettes are available for over 700 of the excellent productions from the National Public Radio. Subjects include the arts, health, family social science and education. Write for more information. Catalog available on request.

Raintree Publishers Inc.
310 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53203.

Each year Raintree Publishers sponsors a "Publish-A-Book Contest" for students in grades 4, 5 and 6. The entrants are given a special theme each year and must be sponsored by a teacher or librarian. For more information write "Publish-A-Book Contest" at the above address.

Silo/Alcazar Records
Box 429
South Main Street
Waterbury, VT 05676.

As a distributor of high quality music this company has a wide selection of children's albums, cassettes, books and videos. This includes the album, *Take Me With You* by Peter Alsop. A "Parent's Choice Award" winner, it includes songs that are fun and encourage imaginative and independent thinking. The humorous songs attract children's attention and allow them to think about things that relate to their own experiences. Other examples are *We All Live Together* by Greg and Steve and *A Swinger of Birches*—Poems by Robert Frost for Young People by Clifton Fadiman. Silo/Alcazar also distribute Kids' Records of Canada. There are read-a-book tapes introducing children to Canadian children's literature and Rudyard Kipling's classic stories as well a tape giving a child's look at Mozart. (Catalog available on request.)

Keep the Spirit of Christmas

When you do your Christmas shopping
And you're picking out the toys
Please remember that your choices
Will be building girls and boys.

Tools and science sets and paints
And books of other lands
Should now replace the things of war
In all our children's hands.

Give them blocks for building peace;
Our youth can make it true.
And toys that make a game of war
Should never come from you!

War's too grim a thing for fun
And much too sad for play
So give our youth constructive toys
As promise of a better day.

Anonymous

Reprinted by permission from "Stop the War Toys Campaign," P.O. 1093, Norwich, CT 06360

Creative Problem-Solving and Cooperation

Publications

A Guide Book for Cooperative Learning
By Dee Dishon and Pat Wilson O'Leary
Learning Publications, 1984.

This guidebook helps classroom teachers enhance their students' achievements through cooperative learning activities. Students can learn to work productively and enjoyably in groups while achieving academic goals. Increased peer support, higher motivation and positive attitudes are developed. (Learning Publications, P.O. Box 1326, Holmes Beach, FL 33509.)

Children's Problem Solving Books
By Elizabeth Crary
Parenting Press.

This series of books help young children to resolve social conflicts by increasing their awareness of alternatives and possible consequences of different behaviors. The books can be read traditionally or as a "choice" book in which the reader can decide what the character will do. The text includes questions that encourage children to consider the feelings of others. Each book focuses on a different behavior: *I Want It*, *I Can't Wait*, *I Want to Play*, *My Name Is Not Dummy* and *I'm Lost*. (Parenting Press, 7750 31st Ave., N.E., Seattle, WA 98115.)

The Cooperative Sports and Games Book
By Terry Orlick
Panthenon, 1978.

This practical book has a comprehensive selection of cooperative games for preschoolers through adults. An excellent resource for teachers and parents interested in finding alternatives to competition. (Panthenon, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022.)

Creative Conflict Resolution
By William Kreidler
Scott, Foresman and Co., 1984.

This valuable resource supplies over 200 activities for keeping peace in the home and classroom. The activities are directed toward students in grades K-6, and help children deal more effectively with each other and in conflict situations. It also has valuable background information for adults on understanding conflict, improving communication skills and teaching cooperation. (Scott, Foresman and Co., 1900 E. Lake Ave., Glenview, IL 60025.)

The Decision is Yours
By Elizabeth Crary
Parenting Press, 1987.

This series is directed toward children 7-9 years of age. It offers children the chance to make decisions for the character in the story and see the consequences. The first of the series available is *Finders, Keepers* which allows children to make decisions about real-life problems—like peer pressure or stealing—in a choose-your-own-ending format. (Parenting Press, 7750 31st Ave., N.E., Seattle, WA 98115.)

The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet
By Priscilla Prutzman, et.al.
New Society, 1987.

This is a handbook on creative approaches to living and problem solving for children. It discusses the roots of violence, ways in which teachers can diagnose the needs of their class, and ways in which interested people can plan workshops on creative problem solving and cooperation. The book includes many children's activities and examples of successful programs and workshops. (CCRC, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.)

Games Children Should Play
By Mary K. Cihak and Barbara Jackson Heron
Scott, Foresman, 1980.

In a year-long sequential plan for teaching communication skills this program helps students find effective ways of relating to others. It covers the development of self-concept, communication skills, problem solving and assertiveness training. There is also a valuable chapter which deals with using the telephone and recognizing potentially dangerous situations. The lessons and worksheets are reproducible for classroom use and are graduated in levels of sophistication. (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1900 East Lake Avenue, Glenview, IL 60025)

Kids Can Cooperate
By Elizabeth Crary
Parenting Press, 1984.

Kids can cooperate if they have the skills. Crary describes how to teach children the skills they need to solve conflicts themselves. In addition to step-to-step process for helping children negotiate with each other, she provides activities and offers ways to motivate children to resolve their conflicts themselves. (Parenting Press, 7750 31st Ave., NE, Seattle, WA 98115.)

Our Classroom
By Chick Moorman and Dee Dishon
Personal Power Press, 1983.

For teachers of K-6, this book will help them build an atmosphere of togetherness and cooperation. It focuses on activities and strategies that foster notions of belonging, interdependence and mutual respect. (Personal Power Press, P.O. Box 68, Portage, MI 49081.)

Snoozing Frogs and Lazy Dogs
By Bill Stinson and Darrel Lang
Center for Health Promotion and Wellness.

For children today who are challenged by a variety of stresses including peer pressure and school environments with prolonged concentration periods, there comes the need for ways to briefly ease tense muscles and minds. Stinson and Lang offer creative exercises and movement that can be used to relax tense muscles and restore attentive powers of young children. Today's children need to be able to cope with and adjust to stress. Parents and teachers can use this book to teach children to discover for themselves the benefits of quieting and relaxation techniques in their everyday lives. (Center for Health Promotion and Wellness, Attn: Bill Stinson, College of Education, Emporia State University, Emporia, KS 66801)

Think of Something Quiet
By Clare Cherry
David S. Lake Publishers, 1981.

This book helps teachers and parents teach children about quiet—to help them understand what tension is, what it feels like, what causes it and what they can do to relax tension and ease the symptoms of stress. There are chapters on the importance of nonverbal communication, relaxation through humor, and getting the most out of rest time. (David S. Lake Publishers, 19 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002.)

Organizations

Children's Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC)
Box 271
Nyack, NY 10960

CCRC provides workshops which give people skills to improve self-concept, work together toward common goals, improve communication skills, and find alternative solutions to conflict. A variety of materials are available including: *Sharing Space* newsletter (3 times a year/$3); *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet*, and *Children's Songs for a Friendly Planet*. (CCRC, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.)

Interpersonal Communication Services, Inc. (ICS)
7052 West Lane
Eden, NY 14057

ICS, Inc. is a private, non-profit corporation providing resources and services to enhance the functioning of groups and organizations and facilitate more effective communication between family members, students and teachers. It publishes *For Parents*, "A Newsletter for Communicating Families," which provides practical tips for positive communication and value development. Subscription $12.95/yr (5 issues).

Parenting for Peace and Justice
4144 Lindell Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108

This network was formed as an interfaith, interracial association of families who seek well-being, peace and justice in their living situations and in the broader community. They have resources available including a book, *Parenting for Peace and Justice*. In this book, authors, Kathleen and James McGinnis, discuss helping children deal with violence in the world, multiculturalizing family life, helping children develop as caring persons and other topics. Other materials are available include guidebooks, videos, workshops and the *PPJN Newsletter*. Subscription $15/yr (6 issues).

Affective Education: Children's Social and Emotional Education

Publications and Curriculums

Alerta
By Leslie Williams and Yvonne De Gaetano
Addison-Wesley, 1985.

A child-centered curriculum, in the form of a single 325-page teacher source book, it is divided into content areas such as developing partnerships, identifying community resources, observing children's interests, developmental levels, and language use. It also has integration strategies for language learning throughout the program. The source book contains 68 blackline masters of worksheets, charts and forms. (Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 2725 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025.)

Circle of Warmth
By Geraldine Ball
Magic Circle Publishing

Circle of Warmth is an engaging program with many activities to help parents learn about family growth process and strategies for providing support and guidance to family members. It is based on three concepts: 1) Awareness of family members feelings, thoughts and actions, 2) Effective social interaction and empathy, and 3) Mastery of self-concept and self-love. Written in an engaging, easy-to-read style, parents learn about the growth process—their own as well as their children. (Magic Circle Publishing Company, P.O. Box 1577, Spring Valley, CA 92077.)

CORE/PALS Learning Process
By Gina Clare
Uni-Ed Associates.

Gina Clare, associate professor of Education at Monmouth College (West Long Branch, NJ) has created a program for young children which couples a warm, compatible environment with joint learning through friendship. The process also includes a "Spiral Curriculum in Social Studies" based on the song, "We All Live Together" (Youngheart Music), which is a progression of concepts from the neighborhood to the whole universe. Another component is the "Rainbow Connection," a Home and School Learning Program that creates a mutual support system for the child's optimal development. As children master the skills in a friendly environment, they learn there are other people in the world and that regard for others is important to daily life. (Uni-Ed Associates, Box 2343, Elberon, NJ 07740.)

Creating the Caring, Capable Kid
By Dr. Gerry Dunn
Magic Circle Publishing, 1988.

This program promotes the ideals of non-violence and peace keeping at interpersonal and global levels. These ideals will be taught through the form of skills. The new curriculum will develop in children, grades 2-6, two key characteristics of socially responsible people—judgment and self-discipline. Storybooks, cassette-recorded sing-along songs, and activity books (written in lesson-plan format) focus on these themes: Developing Respect, Self-Control, Crime Prevention, and Substance Abuse. Decision-making and discussion are the principle strategies used to help students progress to higher levels of judgment and self-discipline. (Magic Circle Publishing Company, P.O. Box 1577, Spring Valley, CA 92077.)

Culture and Children
By Gayle Browne, Janet Howard and Mabel Pitts
Texas Department of Human Services, 1984.

This resource guide is excellent for teaching cultural diversity in the early childhood education programs. It presents the relationship between culture and the child's personality development—including the role of the family as a cultural unit. Six cultures are presented in depth for teachers interested in learning more about child-rearing, customs and languages of various ethnic groups. Highlighted throughout with illustrations and photographs, it presents excellent examples of activities and provides directions for teachers to develop their own. (Texas Department of Human Services, Media Services Division M/C 206E, P.O. Box 2960, Austin, TX 78769.)

Diversity in the Classroom
By Frances E. Kendall
Teachers College Press, 1983.

This book is a resource for those looking into a multicultural approach to the education of young children. It discusses child development, parent involvement, preparing the classroom and planning a resource unit on affirming cultural diversity, and developing the multicultural classroom environment. (Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, New York 10027.)

Friends Indeed: A Course in Helping
By Charles Smith
Cooperative Extension Service.

A fascinating personal study program to strengthen your ability to be an effective helper and provide emotional support to others, this program's emphasis is on contact, listening and encouragement. Available for 50¢ from: Cooperative Extension Service, Distribution Center, Umberger Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

Helping Kids Make Friends
By Boys Town.

A well-written and easy-to-read pamphlet which explains why friends are a necessity for a child's social and emotional growth. It also includes information on ways parents and teachers can help teach the social skills needed to develop positive relationships. To obtain a free copy write to: Communications and Public Service Division, Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, Boys Town, NE 68010.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk
By Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
Rawson, Wade Publishers, 1980

This is an easy-to-read, yet practical book which offers ways to solve common problems such as helping your child deal with feelings and attain

a positive self-image. It allows parents to see that by talking and listening effectively that they can reduce the conflicts and tensions of parenting. For ordering information write to: ICS, 8481 N. Main St., Eden, NY 14057.

Learning to Care
By Norma Feshbach et.al.
Scott, Foresman, 1983.

This excellent activity resource book assists teachers in helping children interact effectively with peers and adults. The activities strengthen communication and decision-making skills as well as help enhance children's empathy, social understanding and social development. (Scott, Foresman and Co., 1900 E. Lake Ave., Glenview, IL 60025.)

Let's Be Friends
By Jackie Weissman
Miss Jackie Music.

This is a picture song book celebrating the joys of friendship. The black-and-white photographs show a multi-ethnic group of children helping, sharing, and playing together. Children with handicaps are included. Also available with a record in combination with *All About Me*. Distributed by Gryphon House, P.O. Box 275, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712.

Magic Circle
Magic Circle Publishing.

This program deals with developing students' self-esteem and social skills. It includes activity guides for Preschool-6th grade which are organized around units in the areas of "Awareness," "Mastery," and "Social Interaction." Carefully sequenced to gradually increase the challenge to the learner, each unit also contains class activities and directions for leading circle sessions. (Magic Circle Publishing, P.O. Box 1577, Spring Valley, CA 92077.

New Friends.
By Shelly Heekin
Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project.

The "New Friends" program utilizes large dolls with varying disabilities and mainstreaming activities to help young children understand and accept individual differences. There is a 155-page teacher's manual with seven units, each introducing a specific doll with sample scripts, discussion guide on a specific disability, guidelines for answering frequently asked questions, class activities, and resources. Doll pattern, family album and other materials are available. (Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Program, Lincoln Center, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.)

The Parent Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting
By Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay
American Guidance, 1982.

This is an easy-to-read handbook that provides a practical approach to parent-child relations. It covers understanding children's behavior, encouragement, communication, family meetings and more. (American Guidance Service, Circle Pines, MN 55014.)

Prime Time for Families
By Michael Pappas
Winston Press, 1980.

To help family members build on individual and family strengths, Pappas has based over 50 activities on encouraging families to work together and consider such value goals as affection, respect and responsibility. In workbook format, this book helps families "take stock" of their wants, needs and concerns and helps them arrange time to gather together to set goals for their future. (Winston Press, 1700 Montegomery, San Francisco, CA 94111.)

Promoting the Social Development of Young Children
By Charles Smith
Mayfield Publishing, 1982.

For teachers and parents who are interested in learning more about the social development of young children (preschool-1st grade), this book is an excellent source of in-depth information on changes in personal/social development. Smith provides strategies and activities which deal with emotions as well as empathy, affiliation (making friends), conflict resolution and cooperation. (Mayfield Publishing, 285 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301.)

Pumsy, In Pursuit of Excellence
By Jill Anderson
Timberline Press, 1987.

A cognitive self-esteem program for young children 7-10, it allows teachers to help students with self-acceptance by creating an environment that is supportive and warm. The program contains a teacher's guide, spirit masters, student texts and personal growth stickers. (Timberline Press, P.O. Box 70071, Eugene, OR 97401.)

Thinking, Changing and Rearranging
By Jill Anderson
Timberline Press, 1987.

A cognitive self-esteem program for children ages 9-17, it allows

teachers to help students realize that self-esteem must come from within themselves. Students are asked to take a good look at their own thinking, language and belief system and gain power over their inner emotional environment. The program contains a teacher's guide, spirit masters, student texts and personal growth stickers. (Timberline Press, P.O. Box 70071, Eugene, OR 97401.)

Why Does That Man Have Such a Big Nose?
By Mary Beth Quinsey
Parenting Press, 1986.

This book is an excellent resource for parents and teachers of young children to use as a springboard for discussions on people's physical and ethical differences. Formatted on answering children's questions about people who are different from themselves, each section is highlighted with a large photograph. (Parenting Press, 7750 31st Ave., NE, Seattle, WA 98115.)

Resources and Organizations

Claudia's Caravan
Owner, Claudia Schwalm

This store located in Alameda, California, has a catalog that contains over 200 entries on multicultural materials including: resource and activity books, games and manipulatives, records, puppets, and dolls. To order a catalog, enclose $1 (refunded in first order) and send to: Claudia's Caravan, P.O. Box 1582, Alameda, CA 94501.

Guidance Associates
Communications Park, Box 3000
Mount Kisco, New York 10549

This company supplies a wide selection of videos or filmstrips programs to be used with affective education programs. Subjects covered include the development of self-esteem, communication and problem solving—including assertiveness.

Hal's Pals
For Challenged Kids
5959 Triumph St.
Commerce, CA 90840

This doll line promotes an image of independence for children with disabilities. The line includes: a ballerina with hearing aids, a girl with leg braces who walks with help from two canes, a boy dressed in a warmup suit and sitting in a wheelchair, a visually impaired girl with a guide dog and cane, and a one-legged ski instructor. The 19", soft-sculptured dolls

portray disabilities in a familiar, comfortable way, focusing on ability and strength, not pity.

Japanese Curriculum Project (JACP)
414 East Third Ave.
San Mateo, CA 94401

JACP is a non-profit educational corporation which disseminates a wide selection of Asian-American curriculum materials. This includes books for children and adults, activity books, games and dolls.

Kids on the Block
822 N. Fairfax
Alexandria, VA 22314

Kids on the Block are life-size puppets that help children understand the special qualities of handicapped people. The family of puppets includes not only characters with physical handicaps but also characters with social handicaps. The puppets were designed as a means to help prepare nondisabled children to accept the handicapped youngsters who would be coming into regular classes under the new law, PL 94-142.

National Council for Self-Esteem
John Dewell, Vice-Chairman
2102 E. 25th St. South
Tulsa, OK 74114

The goal of the Council is to increase national awareness of the importance of self-esteem through identifying and disseminating information on research and successful projects and practices related to the development of self-esteem. It also works to foster communication between individuals and agencies which promote the development of self-esteem.

Pinnaroo Publishing
P.O. Box 7525
Bend, OR 97708

This company offers a selection of educational materials including a comprehensive reference guide to early childhood programs, *Early Educator's Tool Box*, and a useful parent communication resource book, *Creative Parent Communication*. This graphic art book contains over 30 eye-catching, reproducible letter shells on which teachers can write notes and announcements. Also available is an award-winning national newsletter for educators of young children, *Preschool Perspectives*. It supplies information on affective education programs as well as information on child development and new resources. Subscription $24/yr (10 issues).

Sunburst Communications
39 Washington Ave.
Pleasantville, New York 10570-9971

A wide selection of videos or filmstrips programs are available to be used with affective education programs. Subjects covered include the development of self-esteem, communication and problem solving—including assertiveness.

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14. KID'S PEACE SONG

F C7
People come in diff'rent sizes
F C7
Colors, shapes and names
F C7 F Bb
Tho' we're diff'rent on the outside
F C7 F F C7 F
Inside I think we're the same!

F Bb F
Sometimes happy, sometimes sad
F C7
Scared or silly, mean or mad
F Bb F
Feelings you have, I have too,
F C7 F
We're not so diff'rent me and you.
Bb F
I'll bet you have ideas like me
C7 F F7
Our brains are built the same, you see?
Bb F
And if I understand you right,
C7
We both love peaceful sleep at night

Chorus

We love to laugh and play and run
And we would never start a war
We're all afraid of bombs and guns
We know that one fight leads to more.
Our country says we must be ready
For a fight, no matter where
Even though that might be right,
It makes the other countries scared

Chorus

It's time to try a diff'rent way
Where fighting isn't in the plan
We can be strong without our bombs
It's time that all the bombs were banned
Kids like us live everywhere
Around the world, in ev'ry land
The words we speak are not the same
But Peace on Earth we understand

Chorus

EXERCISES: Ask some of the people you know these questions:
1) Do you want world peace?
2) What do we need to do for world peace to happen?
3) What do you do to help world peace?
Then try to answer these questions yourself. Make a list of some of the ways that people around the world are different and what they're fighting about. Then write down some ways that people are the same all over the world, and some of the common problems we face. Looking at how we're like each other, seems like a good starting place for finding peaceful ways to live together.

QUESTIONS: Do you think it would be easier for a group of different people working together to come up with a plan for world peace, or for one person? Do you ever get good ideas from talking with other people? Did you ever stop thinking about a problem because you didn't have any idea about what to do? Did that problem ever get solved? How?

DISCUSSION: How to get the world to be a peaceful place is a very complicated problem. To have peace in the world, we need to stop being afraid of each other. If someone trys to hurt us, then we need to figure out why they're doing it. We need to look for other ways to solve the problems instead of fighting.

INSTRUMENTS: Guitar, bass guitar, piano, synthesizer organ, synthesizer marimba, drums, triangle, gourd,

"Kid's Peace Song" and accompanying questions from the recording *Take Me With You* by Peter Alsop, © 1986, Moose School Music, EMI. Reprinted by permission. Further information available from Peter Alsop, Ph.D., Box 960, Topanga, CA 90290.

Community Action

Publications

Broadcasting
Broadcasting Publications, Inc.

This weekly magazine includes information on developments in network, local, and public television and regulatory agencies. It also presents reports on FCC filings and actions. (Broadcasting, 1705 DeSales St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.)

Community Television Review
National Federation of Local Cable Programmers.

Each quarterly issue of the Review focuses on a different issue relevant to local cable. It also reports on community access center activities and cable legislation. (National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, 906 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington D.C. 20003.)

Managing the Media Maze
By Jane Friedman, et.al.
Child Care Employee Project, 1984.

By providing incentive and practical suggestions for approaching local media, the authors help teachers and directors and other groups utilize local television, radio and print media which can be intimidating to those who are unfamiliar with them. It describes how to develop a "media representative" and "media book" to effectively use information obtained. (Child Care Employee Project, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705.)

Media Resource Guide
By the Foundation for American Communications (FACS).

This guide is utilized by public relations professionals and community groups. It contains information about public service announcements, sample press releases, response to editorials, feature stories, news conference guidelines plus design and content suggestions for newsletters. (FACS, 3383 Barham Blvd.,Los Angeles, CA 90068.)

School Age NOTES
By Richard T. Scofield, Editor.

This periodical is for school-age child care workers and administrators. It highlights articles on child development, school age activities, "Directors Corner," "Administrative Notes," and "News Update." A valuable resource for those working with school-age children. Subscription $12.95/yr (6 issues). (School Age NOTES, P.O. Box 120674, Nashville, TN 37212.)

Talking Back
By the Public Media Center.

This book is described as "an owner's manual for America's airwaves" and is published by the Public Media Center. It is a guide to broadcasting and includes a special report on initiative campaigns and models for correspondence. (Public Media Center, 25 Scotland Street, San Francisco, CA 94133.)

Networks, Government Agencies and Trade Organization

ABC
1330 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10019

CBS
51 West 52nd Street
New York, NY 10019

NBC
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10020

PBS
485 L'Enfant Plaza West
Washington, D.C. 20024

Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
1919 "M" St. N.W.
Washington DC 20554

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
Bureau of Consumer Protection
Pennsylvania Ave. and Sixth St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580

National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)
1771 "N" St., N.W.
Washington D.C. 20036

Community Resources

National Community Education Association
119 No. Payne St.
Alexandria, VA 22314

The Association addresses the educational needs and issues of children, youth or adults. It offers workshops, and support to local affiliates as well as publishing a newsletter. More information available on request.

National Parent Teachers Association (PTA)
700 N. Rush St.
Chicago, IL 60611

The National PTA has a wide selection of publications available on education, health, safety and television including *Children and Television: What Parents Can Do?*. Catalog available on request.

School-Age Child Care Project
Center for Research on Women
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA 02181

This Project can help community groups with interests and concerns about school-age children and early adolescence. It offers telephone and on-site consultations and works with local and state action groups on

policy issues. It also supplies leadership training, staff training and workplace seminars for parents. Books and a newsletter (3 times/year) are available. Information available on request.

Stop the War Toys Campaign
New England War Resisters League
Box 1093
Norwich, CT 06360

This Campaign has resources available for organizing against violence and stereotyping in toys and cartoons. It has a packet available which contains general background information, project ideas, the creation of "War Toys Free Zones," as well as stickers and buttons supporting non-violence and "Stop the War Toys Campaign.

"Letting Your Voice Be Heard"

When developments occur which are of concern to you, it's most effective if you react as soon as possible—both because you will be more motivated to do something "in the heat of the moment" and because the issue is also likely to still be a hot one for the legislator. Thus, if you read in your local paper that Congress has opened hearings on some aspect of television, sit down right then and write your representatives with your opinions on the subject. You can be sure the "other side"—the affected industries and broadcasters—are well organized and vocal.

Don't worry that your message won't be as impressive or carry as much weight as the so-called big guns: Congress is as concerned about what the ordinary citizens, the homemakers, the local doctors, and the school teachers think as it is about the positions of big business, which is recognized as having the finances and resources to keep itself well-informed and vocal. Your message need not be highly technical or complex. It should simply be the honest and forthright opinion of a concerned citizen.

Write to the subcommittee or committee chairman, where relevant action is expected, so that your letter becomes part of the committee file or public opinion on the particular issue in question. And, it is always appropriate to send a copy of your letter to your own representatives. Letters to Congress should be addressed:

To Senators: The Honorable NAME
U.S. Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

To Congresspersons: The Honorable NAME
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

"Capitol Communications"

Your elected representatives can better represent your needs if you let them hear from you directly.

1. *Be specific*. Identify the issue that concerns you and *try to confine your discussion to that one area*. For example, don't write a paragraph about the problems with exposing children to advertising of sugared cereals and then devote another paragraph to another pet concern, such as energy conservation.

2. *Be brief*. State concisely and legibly your opinions, arguments and facts. Your position on the issue should be clear in the first paragraph, and you do not need to present every available argument on the subject to be persuasive.

3. *Include your expert knowledge*. Your letter can serve as a resource to the legislator, so include relevant facts and figures if they are available to you. Frequently, when defending their positions on an issue, legislators will use information received from constituents which has impressed them. It is particularly helpful in this instance if you cite any professional qualifications you may have: nutritionist, educator, etc. But again, do not feel that only professional credentials are relevant.

4. *Write as a member of an organization, where relevant*. If you are a member of a state, local, or national group which shares your position on the issue you are addressing, include that information. Where appropriate you may use the letterhead of your organization, since this indicates a number of others share your point of view.

5. *Express your thanks*. Too often, legislators hear only from those who want something. It indicates real commitment to your issue when you take time to notice how the legislator has voted and then thank him/her for sharing your position. Conversely, it doesn't hurt to express disappointment for a vote cast against your position.

6. *Request an answer*. This shows you are truly concerned about the legislator's intentions on an issue. You may choose to respond to points made in that answer, but unless there are obvious errors or you feel very strongly about something the legislator has done, don't damage your credibility by responding to every communication.

7. *Keep copies of your letter and the response received*. It is helpful to know what you have said about an issue in the past and even more important to have specific evidence of a legislator's position on an issue.

"How to File Comments in an FCC Rulemaking"

The following guidelines are provided to assist you in filing comments with the FCC:

Your Experience

The FCC is interested in any experiences, judgments or insights you might have that would shed light on issues and questions raised in a inquiry or rulemaking.

Public Documents

You can obtain copies of Notice of Inquiry or a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking by contacting [ITS, Inc. 1919 M St., N.W., Suite 140, Washington, D.C. 20037. (202) 857-3800].

All Notices of Inquiry and Proposed Rulemaking are printed in the Federal Register soon after they are released by the Commission. The Federal Register is available in most public libraries across the country.

Facts

Your comments should explain who you are and what your interest is. State the facts briefly, but fully. Clearly explain your experience and any additional evidence which supports your position.

Be Specific

Your comments should be explicit. If the details of the proposed rules or if only one of the several provisions of the rule are objectionable to you, make this clear. If the rule would be acceptable with certain safeguards explain them and why they are needed.

Other Options

Your comments should include facts which might support a different position, discuss them and explain why the public interest requires that the matter be resolved as you propose.

Docket Number

Be sure to note the Docket Number of Rulemaking Number on your comments.

Filing Date

Arrange for your comments to reach the Commission on or before the comment or reply date included in the Notice of Inquiry or Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Filing Comments

Submit your written comments to: Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 1919 M St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20054.

If you want your comments to be received as a formal filing, FCC rules require that you send an original and *five* copies of your comments; if you send an original and *nine* copies, each Commissioner will get a copy, which is even more effective. The original is the copy that you sign.

"Sample Form for Submitting Formal Comments to the FCC"

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554
Docket No. 79-219
In the matter of
Comments of
Files these comments in response to the Notice of Inquiry
and Proposed Rulemaking on
Respectfully submitted,
By:
Subject goes here
The name of your organization goes here
Name of your organization
Describe your organization and its interest in the FCC
Make your comments
End your comments in this manner
Name of your organization and address
Sign your name
Type your name
Your title or position
Date your comments

"Letting Your Voice Be Heard," "Capitol Communications," "How to File Comments in an FCC Rulemaking," and "Sample Form for Submitting Formal Comments to the FCC," from: Peggy Charren & Martin Chandler, *Changing Channels*, © 1983, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., Reading, Massachusetts. Pgs. 234, 235 & 236. Reprinted with permission.

Reproducible Notes for Others

WARNING: TV Interactive Toys May Be Hazardous To Your Child's Social Development

Mattel Toys, in a multi-million dollar advertising campaign, has introduced high-tech toys with a **new twist**—they violently interact with children's television programs. Children shoot at on-screen enemies who shoot back.

Because children must physically take on the role of aggressors or defenders, experts regard this new type of entertainment as a more negative influence than violent programming alone. Aggression researchers warn that television interactive toys desensitize children to the real dangers and harm of violent behavior and increase the chance that children will use violence to settle conflicts.

"My Captain Power™ jets are awesome! I can battle with real scenes on TV that even fire back at me, plus I can collect all the great figures."

SEARS 1987 WISH BOOK FOR KIDS

What the Experts Say

"It [the marketing of interactive toys] sacrifices our children's welfare for a few dollars. It adds a stronger component, combining the viewing and role-playing of violence."

John Murray, Ph.D., and head of the Kansas State University Department of Human Development and Family Studies

"The underlying concept of these [interactive] toys is teaching children to solve problems by pulling triggers. Children learn about the world and how to solve problems through the content of their play. In many ways it determines how we see the world."

Lee Salk, Ph.D., clinical professor of pediatric psychology and child development at Cornell Medical Center

"The new interactive program, **Captain Power and the Soldiers of the Future,** *is the most violent we have ever seen. During the first two programs we monitored, there was an average of one attempted murder every 30 seconds and a killing every minute."*

Thomas Radecki, M.D., practicing psychiatrist at the University of Illinois School of Medicine and chairperson of the National Coalition on Television Violence.

How our children perceive the world and how they respond to conflict depends on us. We must arm our children with knowledge, rather than guns.

Excerpt from **TV Interactive Toys: The New High Tech Threat to Children.**
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9 Ways to Use TV to Help, Not Harm, Your Child

1. **Don't use TV as a babysitter.** It may seem easier to place children in front of the television regardless of the quality of programming when you are busy around the house, but remember, children build strong family ties from their participation in household chores and shopping. Include them in these activities.

2. **Carefully select the shows your family watches.** Be the parent and insist that certain shows are off limits.

3. **Set aside a time for "family shows," programs you watch together.** When parents and children express views about the program's content and exchange ideas, family members gain insights about the program and each other.

4. **Include children in family decisions about what you will watch together.** This shows children their ideas are respected and can set the stage for family meetings to discuss other family projects.

5. **Be a model for your child.** Choose carefully the programs you watch.

6. **Don't use TV as a reward or punishment.** As such, it can become a crutch which places too much value on the medium. Instead, try to think of something more directly tied to the child's behavior.

7. **Join with other parents in your community to press for more and better programs for children and families.** Organized viewers do make a difference. You may also want to contact the national advocacy group Action for Children's Television, 46 Austin St., Newtonville, MA 02160.

8. **Use activities like the following to enhance the learning value of the TV shows you watch as a family:**

   - Ask your child to exercise his/her imagination and think of another title for the program or series you are watching.
   - Read newspaper articles together describing the show before watching it. Have your child write a description or narration of the program after viewing it.
   - During a commercial break ask your child to predict what will happen next.
   - Turn off the volume but leave the picture on. Ask your child to guess what is happening by watching the action without the sound.
   - Have your child draw a picture describing his feelings about a show. Discuss the picture together.
   - Ask your child to time the commercials during a show then add them together.

9. **Be as selective with your child's TV diet as you are with what he or she eats.** Just as we are what we eat, to some extent, so too we are what we watch!

By Bernadette Angle, Ph.D., Associate Professor at Youngstown State University, Special Education Department

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Endnotes

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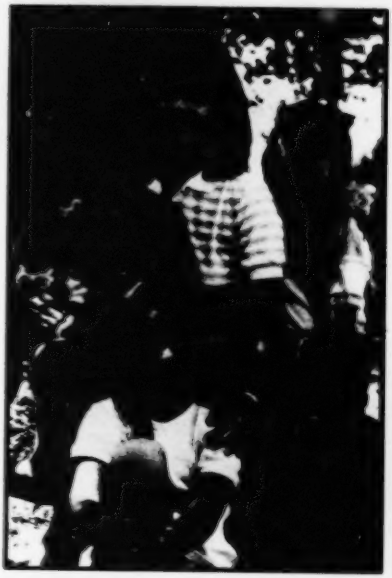

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